

# FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS OF THE ALLIED FORCES 1939-45



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# FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS 1939-45

## INTRODUCTION

In a period of just over two years, from 15 March 1939 to 30 April 1941, ten countries—Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Denmark, Luxembourg, Belgium, Netherlands, France, Yugoslavia and Greece—were defeated in campaigns in which Nazi Germany deployed revolutionary techniques of mobile warfare, confirming it as the predominant European military power.

The breakneck speed of German victories allowed some defeated troops to escape prisoner-of-war cages and set up guerrilla units in rural areas, or to escape to friendly countries, principally France, Great Britain, British-occupied Palestine and Egypt, and the Soviet Union, where their political leaders established governments-in-exile and formed them into military units to continue the struggle against Nazi tyranny.

The hard-pressed Western Allies welcomed this well-motivated manpower with open arms. Naval and merchant ships were immediately assigned new duties, and aircrew formed into new squadrons or absorbed into existing ones. Army units, requiring greater personnel and equipment investment, developed more slowly, and initially only Poland could field enough troops to fulfil a major battlefield role. With the flow of escapers from occupied homelands reduced to a trickle, and settlers abroad proving difficult to organise, some governments were reluctant to risk symbolic annihilation by committing their only national unit to combat; and could only expand significantly from 1944, as their countries were liberated by the Allies.

These emigré servicemen, fanatically anti-German and with priceless 'in-country' knowledge, were valuable recruits for unconventional and clandestine warfare being developed by the British. Some joined 10th (Inter-Allied) Commando, a unique international unit, formed 2 July 1942 with 10 companies ('Troops')—including the mysterious



*Lt. Gen. Ingr in the Czechoslovak general officer's service uniform*

*with greatcoat, worn in England from mid-1940.*

7 ('X') Troop manned by Germans, Austrians, Hungarians and other 'enemy nationalities'. Others served in the Special Operations Executive (SOE), formed on 22 July 1940 to send agents to occupied territory on intelligence and sabotage missions, and to develop local resistance movements. By 1944 SOE had 10,000 men and 3,200 women in their Albanian, Belgian, Czechoslovak, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Iberian peninsula, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Yugoslav and Far Eastern Sections.

The end of the war in Europe on 8 May 1945 brought mixed rewards. Western Europeans returned home in triumph; but the Greeks were plunged into a vicious civil war, and the Poles, Yugoslavs, and later the Czechoslovaks were persecuted by Communist governments anxious to minimise their contribution to the war effort. Nevertheless, these European volunteers played a vital but often underestimated role in the victory of the Allies in the Second World War.



# CZECHOSLOVAKIA

On 15 March 1939 17 German divisions invaded the Czech region of Czechoslovakia, proclaiming it the 'Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia', Slovakia having declared independence on the 14th. The Czechoslovak Army, with 38 divisions in September 1938, reduced to 16 understrength divisions, offered no resistance.

Initially Czechoslovak military personnel escaped to Poland, or through Yugoslavia or Lebanon to France. On 11 July 1939 Gen. Lev Prchala, ex-4th Army commander, formed the 3,000-strong 'Czechoslovak Legion' in Cracow, Poland, under Lt. Col. Ludvík Svoboda, with an infantry bn., artillery bn., air sqdn., tank co. and support troops. On 1 September the Germans invaded Poland, and the 1,000-strong Legion (2,000 troops had already transferred to France) were stopped by Soviet troops en route to Rumania; on the 18th they were interned in the Soviet Union as the 'Eastern Group of the Czechoslovak Army'.

On 20 May 1939 the French permitted Czechoslovak enlistment in the French Foreign Legion; and on 20 October allowed President Edvard Beneš and Lt. Gen. Sergej Ingr (formerly 3rd Corps Commander) to establish a 'Reformed Czechoslovak Army in France' from exiles, légionnaires and residents in France. They established a dépôt at Agde, on the Mediterranean coast, and on 15 January 1940 the 1st Czechoslovak Division at Béziers, under Lt. Gen. Rudolf Viest (ex-6th Corps Commander)—11,405 men in 1st, 2nd, 3rd (incomplete) Infantry

Regts. (each 3 bns.); cavalry and motorised sqdns.; 1 Artillery Regt. (3 bns.); engineer and signals battalions. In June the 1st and 2nd Regts. joined the French 23rd Infantry and 239th Light Infantry Divs. respectively in the defence of Paris, but were overwhelmed by 3rd and 4th Panzer Divs. (16th Panzer Corps) on 13 June. The Czechoslovaks retreated to the Mediterranean port of Sète, but only 4,000 arrived by the 26th in time to board British ships evacuating them to Liverpool.

The Franco-German armistice left 206 Czechoslovak reinforcements from Svoboda's unit stranded in Vichy-controlled Beirut; but on 29 June they secretly arranged with the British consul to go to Az Sumeiriya camp, near Tel Aviv in British-controlled Palestine. There they became the '4th Czechoslovak Infantry Regiment' (of the 1st Czechoslovak Division) under Col. J. Koreš, with the 1st Battalion (1st-4th coys) commanded by Lt. Col. Karel V. Klapálek. On 1 November 1940 this was redesignated Czechoslovak Infantry Battalion 11—East (1st Inf, 2nd & 3rd cadre, 4th officers' coys).

In February 1941 the battalion joined the British 8th Army on the Egyptian coast at Mersa Matruh, and on 15 June advanced with 23rd Inf. Bde. (4th Indian Div.) into Libya in 'Operation Battleaxe', which ground to a halt after only two days. The brigade, now under 6th Infantry Div., journeyed to Lebanon to help pacify Vichy-controlled Levant, which surrendered on 11 July. The Czechoslovaks were employed on garrison duties in Aleppo, Syria, until 14 October, when they transferred with the division (redesignated 70th) to Tobruk to relieve the Australian garrison besieged by one German and four Italian divisions. The Czech battalion, now 785 strong with 4 full-strength companies, defended the western perimeter under the Polish Independent Carpathian Brigade. On 10 December British 30th Corps lifted the siege in 'Operation Crusader' and 2nd Company was detached to it as Corps Protection Company, advancing to Antelat, Western Libya. On 7 April 1942 the battalion returned to Palestine, and on 22 May became '200th Czechoslo-



*Maj. Gen. Viest with an Army (left) and Air Force major-generals in July 1940, wearing uniforms adopted in France in*

*October 1939. In England Army generals added collar patches; Air Force officers wore RAF blue.*



*Polish President-in-exile  
Rackiewicz (with Gen.  
Sikorski behind) decorates  
Czech officers; (right to  
left) Brig. Gens.  
Znamenacek and Miroslav,  
and Maj. Gen. Viest; 1941.*



vak Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment—East' (500th, 501st, 502nd Bns., each 4 coys.), by October reaching 1,295 men. On 30 December it returned to Tobruk, recaptured after the Battle of Alamein. Relieved on 14 June 1943, it embarked at Suez for Liverpool, and on 26 August Col. Klapálek's valiant unit was absorbed into 1st Czechoslovak Independent Brigade.

In early July 1940 the exhausted remnants of 1st Czechoslovak Div. camped at Cholmondeley Park, near Chester, and on 15 August became '1st Czechoslovak Mixed Brigade' (Maj. Gen. Bohumil Miroslav, formerly 'Neumann'), with 3,274 men in 1st and 2nd Inf. Bns.; anti-tank, machine-gun, motor-transport and support coys., and services. On 21 July Beneš named his Czechoslovak Provisional Government in London, with Lt. Gen. Ingr as Minister of War and Armed Forces Commander, and Lt. Gen. Viest as his deputy.

The brigade remained in Great Britain for four years, changing quarters and developing its organisation. On 1 July 1941, at Leamington, it became 1st Czechoslovak Independent Brigade, adding 3rd Infantry Bn., another artillery bn., and an AA battery. Later it transferred to Ilminster, then to Lowestoft, and at Colchester on 1 September 1943 was redesignated 1st Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade (Maj. Gen. A. Liška, second-in-command Col. Klapálek)—4,046 men in 1st, 2nd, 3rd (from 10 March 1945) Armoured Bns., each with 3 coys.; Motorised Inf. Bn. (3 coys.); AA Regt.

(1 AA, 1 Anti-tank, 5 Field Btys.), support units and services; the brigade then transferred to Galashiels, Scotland.

On 30 August 1944 the brigade joined Gen. Montgomery's 21st Army Group at Falaise, Normandy; and as part of 1st Canadian Army besieged the strategic port of Dunkirk from 8 October 1944 until 11 May 1945—three days after VE-Day—when the German Vice-Admiral Frisius surrendered. The brigade, now 5,676 strong, set off for Czechoslovakia, reaching Prague on 18 May, its triumphant homecoming being upstaged by Svoboda's 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps, which had reached the city from the east eight days earlier.

From London Col. František Moravec, Czechoslovak Military Intelligence chief, organised intelligence and sabotage missions independently of SOE. On 27 May 1942 two of his agents, Rotmistr Jan Kubiš and Rotmistr Jozef Gabčík, ambushed and mortally wounded in Prague SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, Protectorate Governor, SS-Security Service commander and Himmler's deputy. Heydrich died on 4 June, and Kubiš and Gabčík, betrayed by fellow agent Karel Gurda (executed for treason in 1945), were cornered with several comrades in a church; when further resistance became impossible they shot themselves on the 17th. 'Operation Anthropoid' eliminated an irreplaceable top Nazi and enhanced Beneš's faltering prestige; but the demoralised and decimated resistance organisations remained





*A platoon of the 4th Czechoslovak Infantry Regiment in Palestine in October 1940, wearing British pith helmets and shouldering British SMLE rifles.*

dormant, and up to 5,000 Czechs died in a German orgy of revenge—in political prisons, street round-ups, and the destroyed villages of Lidice and Ležáky.

On 22 June 1941, the day of Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union, Beneš sent a mission to Moscow to form Czechoslovak units on Soviet soil. Svoboda's group, barely 100 strong after two and a half years of Soviet camps and transfers to North Africa, was reformed on 12 February 1942 at Buzuluk in the Urals, as '1st Czechoslovak Independent Field Battalion' (1st–3rd infantry coys., machine-gun, anti-tank, mortar coys., support services)—974 men under Col. Svoboda. On 1 February 1943 '1st Czechoslovak Reserve Regiment' was added.

The battalion first saw action from 8–13 March 1943 at Sokolovo, Ukraine, and on 12 June combined with the Reserve Regt. as '1st Czechoslovak Independent Brigade' (1st, 2nd Inf., 1st, 2nd Arty., Tank, AA Bns.), helping to liberate Kiev on 6 November. That month 2,000 ex-Slovak 1st Infantry Div. soldiers deserted to the brigade; and in March 1944 12,000 West Ukrainian Czechs enlisted from Rovno district. On 8 April the brigade halted at Dukla Pass, on the Polish-Czechoslovak border, unable to advance.

On 5 May 1944 the '1st Czechoslovak Army Corps' (Lt. Gen. Jan Kratochvíl) with 16,000 men—divisional strength—was formed with 1st Independent Brigade (1st–3rd Inf., 1st Mech., 1st

Arty., 1st AT, 1st AA Bns.; services); 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade (1st–2nd Para., 2nd Arty., 2nd AT, 2nd AA Bns.; services), formed 20 January from ex-Slovak Mobile Division; 3rd Independent Brigade (4th–5th Inf., 2nd Mech., 3rd Arty., 4th AT, 3rd AA Bns.; services) formed 20 May; and 1st Independent Armoured Brigade (1st Armd. Bn.; services) formed 25 July.

On 29 August 1944 the Slovak National Uprising commenced, as Slovak units around Banská Bystrica, under Lt. Col. Jan Golian, turned on the Germans. 1st Army Corps tried desperately to break through the Dukla Pass to relieve them, only to be repulsed with heavy losses—Svoboda replaced Kratochvíl as commander. Then on 7 October 2nd Parachute Brigade, now only 2,200 strong, flew to Banská Bystrica, with Maj. Gen. Viest arriving from London to command the insurgents, now designated '1st Czechoslovak Army in Slovakia'. That same day the Corps took Dukla, but too late to save the Slovaks, who surrendered on 31 October—Viest was captured and shot.

On 5 February 1945 4th Independent Brigade (7th–9th Inf., 3rd Mech., 7th Arty., 4th AA Bns.; services) formed and joined the Corps with a reformed 2nd Parachute Brigade. The Corps, now 31,325 strong, advanced westwards, reaching Prague on the 10th to help its citizens, who had risen up in revolt on the 5th. The Germans surrendered on 9 May, one day after VE-Day.



Czechoslovak Air Force personnel served as individuals in Polish and French squadrons, and on 12 July 1940 a Czechoslovak Inspectorate was established in London under Maj. Gen. Karl Janoušek (promoted Air Vice-Marshal, RAF). Three fighter squadrons formed—310 (12 July 1940) and 312 (5 September) at Duxford with Hurricanes, later Spitfires, and 313 (10 May 1941) at Catterick with Spitfires. In May 1942 these formed the 'Czechoslovak (later 134) Fighter Wing'. Czechoslovaks also manned 311 Bomber Squadron (29 July 1940) at Honington with Wellingtons, later Liberators; and a flight of 68 Night-Fighter Squadron with Beaufighters, later Mosquitos; and flew in other RAF and Polish squadrons. The top Allied air ace in the Battle of Britain was Četař Josef František of 303 Polish Squadron, with 17 kills. In August 1945 the four Czechoslovak squadrons flew to Prague and disbanded on 15 February 1946.

On 16 April 1944 21 Czechoslovak pilots arrived

at Ivanovo, Soviet Union, from England, later forming '1st Czechoslovak Fighter Air Regiment' with the Czechoslovak Corps, expanding in January 1945 to '1st Czechoslovak Mixed Air Division' (1st, 2nd Fighter Air Regts.—Lavochkin LA-5s; 3rd Assault Air Regt.—Ilyushin Il-2 Sturmoviks) and fought with Soviet 8th Air Army.

After 1943 Czechoslovak forces in the West, short of recruits to expand their limited strength, were not risked in front-line combat, and their early reputation was eclipsed by the larger, battle-hardened Corps in the East, backed by Czechoslovak Communists. On 7 April 1945 Beneš formed his provisional government in Košice, Slovakia, with Maj. Gen. Svoboda as Minister of War, and the 'London Generals'—Ingr (Armed Forces commander), Miroslav (Chief of Staff) and Moravec (Intelligence)—were summarily dismissed. In the May 1946 election the Communists won 38% of the votes, and on 20 February 1948 forced Beneš to resign, transforming democratic Czechoslovakia into a hardline Soviet satellite state.

## POLAND<sup>1</sup>

The 500,000-strong Polish Army was unable to withstand the superior numbers and firepower of 1,500,000 German and Slovak troops attacking on 1 September 1939, and 400,000 Soviet troops on the 17th. By 5 October Polish units had surrendered, or escaped to Hungary or Rumania.

On 7 November 1939 Lt. Gen. Sikorski was appointed Commander-in-Chief of Polish Armed Forces in France, and 82,000 men enlisted. Four infantry divisions formed, each with three infantry regiments and divisional troops (heavy and light artillery regts., reconnaissance, engineer and signals bns.) bearing the divisional number. 1st Grenadier Div. (1st–3rd Gren. Regts.) and 2nd Rifle Div. (4th–6th Rifle Regts.) were at full strength, 3rd Infantry Div. (7th–9th Inf. Regts.) and 4th Infantry Div. (10th–12th Inf. Regts.) only partially formed. The Independent Highland Brigade (1st, 2nd Half-Brigades, each 2 bns.; Sigs. and Transport Co.) was



*Lt. Gen. Sikorski, tragically killed in a flying accident at Gibraltar on 4 July 1943, decorates two*

*senior NCOs, an infantry warrant officer (left), and an 'Aspirant' of an armoured regiment, 1941.*

<sup>1</sup> This section is designed as a supplement to MAA 117 'The Polish Army 1939–45'.



sent to Norway; 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade (Tank, 10th Mech. Inf., 24th Mot. Cav. Regts.; Arty., Anti-Tank Bns.) and the Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade (1st, 2nd Rifle Regts.; Mountain Arty. Bn.; Recce Bn.) formed in Syria.

When France surrendered 2nd Division interned itself in Switzerland until 1945. The Carpathian Brigade crossed into British Palestine, and 4th Division escaped intact to England. All other units were lost, their dispersed survivors escaping to England or joining the French Resistance.

In all 19,457 troops reached Great Britain and defended the south-east Scottish coast as 1st Polish Corps, formed September 1940, in 1942 renamed 1st Polish Mechanised Corps. On 4 July 1943 Gen. Sosnkowski became C-in-C, on 3 September 1944 Gen. 'Bór' Komorowski (commanding the Home Army resistance force in Poland), finally, on 26 February 1945, Gen. Anders.



In July 1940 1st and 2nd Rifle Brigades were formed, and in August 3rd, 4th, 5th, 7th and 8th Cadre Rifle Brigades (battalion-strength). In November 2nd Brigade became 10th Mechanised, in 1941 10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade. 4th Brigade became 1st Independent Parachute Brigade on 23 September 1941; and 1st Tank Regiment, formed 1 October 1940, was redesignated 16th Tank Brigade in September 1941. On 12 October 1940 I-IV Armoured Train Battalions were formed, each with 2-5 trains (47 officers, 5 other ranks per train), based in Perth, York, Devon and Essex for coastal defence, disbanding, with the remaining rifle brigades, in 1943.

On 25 February 1942 1st Armoured Division was formed, on 10 October 1943 losing its 16th Armoured Brigade to 2nd Cadre Armoured Grenadier Division until 13 February 1945, when the 16th became independent. 2nd Cadre Division, formed August 1943, became 4th Infantry Division in February 1944. The only units to see action were 1st Armoured Division, from 1 August 1944 to 4 May 1945 at Falaise, Breda and Wilhelmshaven; and 1st Parachute Brigade at Arnhem 18-25 September 1944, joining 1st Armoured in Germany in mid-May 1945.

Following the Soviet invasion of Eastern Poland in September 1939 1,250,000 Polish citizens were deported to the Soviet Union, including 180,000 soldiers in POW camps and 150,000 conscripted into the Red Army. The Polish-Soviet pact of 30 July 1941 allowed Lt. Gen. Anders to form the 'Polish Army in the USSR' at Buzuluk in the Urals, establishing in August the 5th and 6th Infantry Divisions, and later cadres for 7th-10th Infantry Divisions. From March to August 1942 the Soviets allowed Anders to evacuate his 70,000 men to British-occupied Iran, then to Iraq, where in October 5th 'Kresowa', 6th 'Lvov' and 7th Infantry Divisions were reformed. Meanwhile the Independent Carpathian Brigade, which had garrisoned Tobruk from 18 August 1941 to March 1942, reformed in Palestine in May as 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division. It

*Lt. Gen. Anders in Italy in 1944, wearing black Armoured Corps beret with rank insignia and unofficial commemorative*

*badge, General's service tunic, and an unofficially decorated Sam-Browne belt. (Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum)*



joined 5th Division, 2nd Tank Brigade (formed May 1942, redesignated 2nd Independent Armoured Brigade in January 1944, and 2nd 'Warsaw' Armoured Division in June 1945), and '2nd Army Group Artillery' (an artillery brigade, formed October 1942) in the 2nd Polish Corps, established 6 July 1943 in Iran. The 50,000-strong Corps fought in Italy from February 1944 to April 1945, distinguishing itself at Monte Cassino, Rome, Ancona and Bologna.

6th Division, disbanded in March 1943, provided replacements for 5th Division. 7th Division, originally earmarked for 3rd Polish Corps when Corps HQ was formed in July 1944, became 2nd Corps Training and Replacement Unit when 3rd Corps was abandoned in December 1944, serving with 14th 'Greater Poland' Armoured Brigade (formed 1945) in Italy, but without seeing action.

1st Independent Commando Company, formed September 1942, joined 10th (Inter-Allied) Commando on 10 February 1943 as 6 (Polish) Troop. Initially sent to Algeria in September 1943, it fought on the Sangro and Garigliano Rivers, on the Italian Adriatic and Mediterranean coasts respectively, with British 2nd Special Service Brigade. It transferred in April 1944 to 2nd Polish Corps, fighting at Monte Cassino and Ancona; and on 3 August left 10th Commando, joined 2nd Armoured Brigade, and expanded into the 2nd Motorised Commando Battalion, which fought at Bologna.



*Vojtek, the brown bear, was adopted by Polish 2nd Corps in Iran in 1942 and in Palestine joined 22nd Artillery Supply Company. At the battle of Monte Cassino he carried shells to forward artillery positions. His likeness was subsequently incorporated in the unit badge. He died in Edinburgh Zoo in 1964. (Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum)*



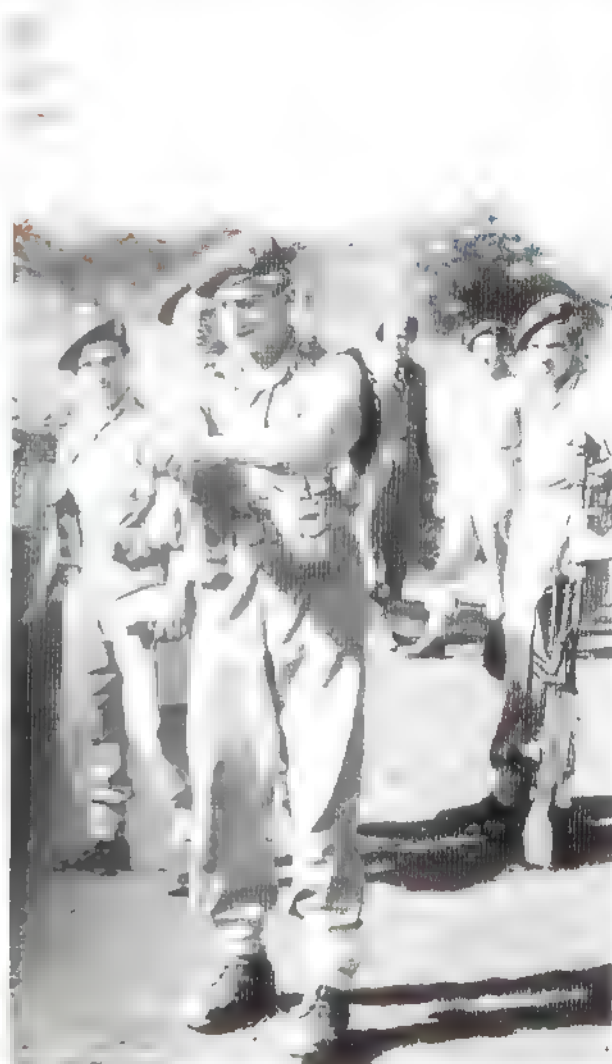
*Cavalrymen of the 12th Polish Lancers Armoured Regiment on parade, with black berets, cavalry bandoliers and, as 2nd Corps HQ troops, the red Corps badge, 1944. (Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum)*





*A staff sergeant of the Polish 2nd Motorised Commando Battalion, in green beret and adapted 'No. 10 Commando' shoulder title, being congratulated by Lt. Gen.*

*Anders; Italy, 1944. Beyond him note men wearing red, blue and white commemorative 'Narvik' lanyards. (Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum)*



*Troops of Polish 2nd Motorised Commando Battalion in khaki drill field uniform and green*

*berets; Italy, 1944. (Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum)*

The Polish '6th Bureau' sent Polish soldiers, agents and supplies, obtained from 'P' Section SOE, to aid the main Polish resistance force, the Home Army (Armia Krajowa). From February 1941 flights were undertaken by Polish 'C' Flight, 138 Squadron RAF, in November 1943 redesignated 1586 Special Duties Flight when operations relocated from Great Britain to liberated Southern Italy.

In late 1941 264 surplus Army officers were posted to British colonial units in West Africa. In late 1944 2,500 Polish resistance fighters formed the 19th and 29th Polish Infantry Groups, serving

under the French Major Thevenon in France and Germany with French 1st Army. Finally, about 4,000 women joined the Women's Auxiliary Service as nurses and administrative personnel.

Five Polish Navy ships reached Great Britain in September 1939, and were based at Plymouth under Rear-Admiral Świrski who, by May 1945, commanded 3,840 naval personnel and 16 ships. Polish vessels served in Norway, the Atlantic, Mediterranean and North Seas. The Merchant Navy, with 138,000 tonnage, carried out transport duties.

In early 1940 Maj. Gen. Zajac formed the 6,863-

*Polish infantry from the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division resting near Bologna, central Italy, in April 1945. Note the khaki general service caps; and the divisional patch above the red cross brassard. (Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum)*



strong Polish Air Force in France with four fighter squadrons (I–IV 145), but only I/145 saw action. From July 1940 Maj. Gen. Ujejski, from 1 September 1943 Col., later Maj. Gen., Iżycki, commanded 19,400 men in 15 squadrons in the RAF: 302, 303, 306, 308, 315–317 Fighter, forming 1st 3rd Polish Wings (303 was the highest scoring Battle of Britain squadron); 307 Night Fighter; 300, 301, 304, 305 Bomber; 309, 318 Reconnaissance; and 663 Artillery Observation. In late 1946 all squadrons were disbanded.

In August 1943 the Soviets began to form military units from Polish deportees in the USSR, under Maj. Gen. Berling. Eventually 200,000 men enlisted in 1st Army (formed 21 July 1944), 2nd Army (formed July 1944) and 3rd Army (formed 6 October 1944), and the 17,000-strong 1st Mixed Air Corps (formed September 1944 with 4 Air Divisions). These forces fought in the western USSR, Poland and Eastern Germany, helping to capture Dresden and Berlin.

Polish units remained in Western Europe until 1947, when personnel transferred to the Polish Resettlement Corps before returning to Communist Poland or choosing exile in the West. Despite huge setbacks, sacrifices, achievements and feats of bravery, Poles on all fronts were robbed of the goal for which they had fought – a free and independent Poland.

### Order of Battle

(Regiments are battalion-strength; Lancers, Hussars, Mounted Rifles are armoured units, Dragoons are mechanised infantry.)

#### *1st Polish Corps*

1st Armd. Div. — 10 Armd. Cav. Bde. (1, 2 Armd., 24 Lancer, 10 Dragoon Rgts.); 3 Rifle Bde. (8, 9 Rifle Bns.; 1 Indep. MG Co.); 10 Mt. Rifle Rgt.; 1, 2 Mot. Arty., 1 AT, 1 AA Rgts.

4th Inf. Div. — 1 Gren. Bde. (1–3 Gren. Bns.); 2 Rifle Bde. (4–6 Rifle Bns.); 8 Inf. Bde. (24–26 Inf. Bns.); 4 MG Bn.; 9 Lancer Recce, 3 Mot. Arty., 13–15 L. Arty., 4 AT, 4 AA Rgts.

1 Indep. Para. Brig. — 1–3 Para. Bns.; L. Arty., AT Bn.

16 Indep. Armd. Brig. — 3, 5 Armd., 14 Lancer, 16 Dragoon Rgt.

#### *2nd Polish Corps*

2nd Armd. Div. — 2 Armd. Bde. (4, 6 Armd., 1 Lancer Rgt.; 2 Mot. Cdo. Bn.); 16 Inf. Bde. (64–66 Inf. Bn.); Carp. Lancer. Recce, 7 Mt. Arty., 16 L. Arty., 2 AA, 2 AT Rgt.

3rd Inf. Div. — 1 Carp. Inf. Bde. (1–3 Carp. Inf. Bns.); 2 Carp. Inf. Bde. (4–6 Carp. Inf. Bns.); 3 Carp. MG Bn.; 12 Lancer Recce, 1–3 Carp. L. Arty., 3 Carp. AA, 3 Carp. AT Rgt.

5th Inf. Div. — 4 Inf. Bde. (10–12 Inf. Bns.); 5 Inf.



Bde. (13-15 Inf. Bns.); 6 Inf. Bde. (16-18 Inf. Bns., 5 MG Bn.); 15 Lancer Recce, 4-6 L. Arty., 5 AA, 5 AT Rgt.  
 14 Armd. Brig. — 3, 15 Lancer, 10 Hussar Rgt  
 2nd Army. Grp. Art. 9 L. Arty., 10, 11 Hvy. Arty., 7 Mt. Arty. Rgt.

#### *Polish People's Army*

1st Army — 1-4 Inf., 1 AA Div.; 1 Armd., 1-5 Arty., 1 Cav., 1 Eng. Bde.  
 2nd Army — 5, 7-9 Inf., 2 Arty., 3 AA Div.; 1 Armd. Corps; 9, 14 AT, 16 Armd., 4 Eng. Bde.  
 3rd Army — 6, 10-12 Inf., 4 AA Div.; 10 Arty., 11 AA, 5 Eng. Bde.

## NORWAY

On 9 April 1940 the German 21st Army Corps (seven divisions) attacked neutral Norway and on 10 June defeated the 50,000-strong Norwegian Army, with six weak divisions, and an Allied Expeditionary Force of four British brigades and a Franco-Polish division.

King Haakon VII established a government-in-exile in London, and on 6 June 1940 a training camp was set up in Dumfries, Scotland, for Norwegians escaping by fishing-boat, or with British commandos returning from raids in Norway. Maj. Gen. Fleischer became Army commander. On 9 September a Training Group was formed, Norwegian

policy being to build up a force ready for the liberation of Norway. On 15 March 1941 this became the Norwegian Brigade: 1,432 men in HQ Company, 1st Battalion (infantry), 1st Artillery Battery, schools and Training Group. A 160-man 'Independent Parachute Company' ('Company F') formed in April 1942; and in August 1st Battalion reorganised into 1st 3rd Mountain Companies, each with 260 men. Later a second battery was raised to form the Artillery Battalion (200 men); and in summer 1944 the 260-man Iceland Garrison, formed in summer 1940 as 'Norwegian Company Iceland', joined as the Independent Reconnaissance Squadron, with armoured cars, jeeps and Bren-carriers.

The troops were impatient for action, and on 11 November 1944 2nd Mountain Company, under Col. Dahl, reached Kirkenes, northern Norway, advancing against retreating German forces. By May 1945, now 3,000 strong, they had secured Finnmark province. On 9 May Company F reached Norway with the British 1st Airborne Division. The rest of the brigade, now 3,927 strong, soon followed, forming the basis of the post-war Norwegian Army, before disbandment on 10 October 1945.

By late 1940 SOE's Scandinavian Section had formed Norwegian Independent Company No. 1 (usually called 'Kompani Linge' after its first commander, Capt. Martin Linge) for clandestine missions. On 4 March 1941 Linge troops and British commandos raided the Lofoten Islands, northern Norway; on 25 August Spitsbergen, Norwegian Arctic; and on 27 December Vagsoy (Vaagso) and Måloy islands, central Norway — where Maj. Linge was killed — and the Lofotens again. Daring attacks on the Norsk-Hydro 'heavy water' factory at Vermok, southern Norway, on 27 February 1943 and 19 February 1944 prevented German development of an atomic bomb. Linge men also operated the SOE-organised 'Shetland Bus' from August 1941 to May 1945 — a regular service of fishing-boats, later US-supplied fast submarine-chasers — between Lerwick and Norway, delivering agents and supplies to 'Milorg' resistance units and picking up



*Crown Prince Olaf of Norway, far right, in the khaki service dress of a general (a rank reserved for the royal family),*

*watching a mortar demonstration by the Norwegian Brigade, 1943. (Sidsel Roine, Forsvarsmuseet)*

A Norwegian Independent Parachute Company lieutenant (centre right) and troops wearing the grey-green cotton duck smock. Note the Norwegian flag and British parachute wings worn by the private (centre left), 1943 (Sidsel Rome, Forsvarsmuseet)



refugees and VIPs. By May 1945 Kompani Linge, 245 strong, had joined the Norwegian Brigade.

5 (Norwegian) Troop, 10th (Inter-Allied) Commando, formed July 1942, carried out five raids on Norway from Lerwick, Shetlands, from November 1942 to March 1943; and from November 1943 to March 1944 accompanied Norwegian naval motor torpedo boats on raids into the fjords. On 30 September 1944 it landed in Normandy with British 4th Special Service Brigade, attacking Walcheren Island, western Netherlands, in October, and Oosterhout, south Netherlands, in December. The Troop sustained heavy casualties on 13 January 1945 at Kapelsche Veer island, and in April joined the Norwegian Brigade in England.

Norwegian troops manned garrisons on South Georgia, South Atlantic, and Jan Mayen and Svalbard islands in the Arctic, beating off a German raid on Svalbard in autumn 1943. Fifty liaison officers were attached to British 52nd Lowland Division (earmarked for a possible invasion of Norway) in autumn 1944, and 15 others saw action with other British units. 10th Battalion Surrey Home Guard had a ten-man Norwegian section; and there was a 199-strong Women's Army Corps.

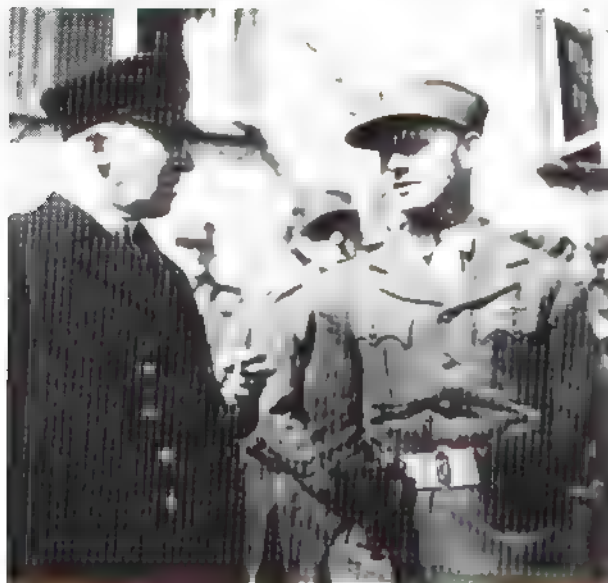
On 1 July 1943 the Swedish government began to organise Norwegian refugees in 42 'health camps' as

infantry units, called 'Police' troops. Eventually 10,000 men were formed into one artillery and nine infantry battalions. In early 1945 two companies were airlifted by US aircraft to join 2nd Mountain Company in Finnmark, and in June 1945 the rest of the force was repatriated.

Of the 113 vessels in the Royal Norwegian Navy in June 1940 only 13 reached England; but by January 1943 the Navy, under Rear-Admiral Corneliusen, numbered 4,906 men, and by May 1945, 7,366, including some Danes and women, in 50 ships. Norwegian MTBs supported commandos in Norway, and the Normandy landings in June 1944. The huge Merchant Navy - 38,000 men in 1,000 vessels - played a major role in the Battle of the Atlantic.

On 4 August 1940 120 Army and Naval Air Service personnel established the 'Little Norway' training base near Toronto, Canada. By 30 May 1945 there were five air squadrons, totalling 2,582 men including some Danes, serving with the RAF 330 Squadron (naval personnel) on Atlantic seaplane patrols, 331 and 332 Fighter Squadrons operating over Northern Europe, and 333 and 334 Squadrons on reconnaissance and clandestine missions. On 21 November 1945 they officially joined the unified Royal Norwegian Air Force, established in August





*Captain of Norwegian Company Iceland on parade. Note the grey-green M1934 'Finnmark' ski-cap with British service*

*dress, and Norwegian leather holster and pouch. (Sidsel Ruine, Forsvarsmuseet)*

1944. A further 1,600 Norwegians served individually in other RAF squadrons.

Although the Norwegian Brigade did not see action the bravery of many small groups of Norwegian soldiers, and the Merchant Navy with its huge capacity, contributed greatly to the Allied cause.

## DENMARK

At 4.10 a.m. on 9 April 1940 the 35,000 troops of German 31st Army Corps carried out a surprise attack on neutral Denmark, and four hours later the 14,450-strong Danish Armed Forces had ceased resistance, having suffered 29 casualties. Hoping to woo Denmark as an ally, the Germans allowed it to retain its government, its armed forces (having confiscated combat aircraft) and, cynically, its neutrality. However, on 29 August 1943, as anti-German feeling intensified, they disbanded these forces, but not before the Danes had scuttled most of the Navy.

On 6 October 1940 the Conservative politician John Christmas Møller established the Danish Council in London, for Danes determined to continue the war against Hitler. Lacking the legitimacy

of a government-in-exile it could not raise military units, but it persuaded the British to allow individual enlistments in the British forces from 1 January 1941. Prospective infantrymen usually joined 'The Buffs' (Royal East Kent Regiment) as their King Christian X had been its Colonel-in-Chief since 1912. By December 1941 there were 100 Danes in the regiment and although these numbers reduced due to transfers to the Commando Forces—Capt. Erik Petersen even fought with Gen. Orde Wingate's 'Chindits' in Burma—they averaged 50. Danes served in other units, including the Grenadier Guards (Møller's son was a 2nd Lt.), RASC, Pioneer Corps and Home Guard. 52 Danes joined SOE, and from December 1941 regularly parachuted into Denmark, liaising with Danish Military Intelligence (permitted to operate by the Germans until August 1943) and helping to mount the air attack on Gestapo HQ at Aarhus on 31 December 1944.

Anders 'Andy' Lassen joined the British Army on 25 January 1941 and transferred to the SOE-controlled 'Small-Scale Raiding Force' (in March 1942 absorbed into 62 Commando, and on 13 May 1943 reabsorbed into the Special Boat Squadron, 2nd SAS Regiment). He won the Military Cross in 1942 for raids on Fernando Po (Spanish West Africa) and Sark, Channel Islands; a bar to the MC in June 1943 in Crete; and a second bar in October on Simi, Greek Dodecanese islands. On 7 September 1945 Maj. Lassen was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross for outstanding bravery at Lake Commachio, Italian Adriatic coast, where, on 9 April, he destroyed three German machine-gun nests with grenades. Lassen was the only foreigner to win Great Britain's highest award in the Second World War.

Danes served in the RAF (overseas subscriptions bought three Spitfires) and Royal Norwegian Air Force; and in March 1944 a Danish Section was established in the Royal Navy, operating mine-sweepers. 110 of the 1,000 Danes (including 100 women) in the British and Dominion Forces died. 5,000 Danish seamen served on merchant ships, transporting Allied troops to North Africa, Sicily and Normandy.

On 15 November 1943 a Danish Brigade ('DANFORCE') was formed by Maj. Gen. K.

Knudtzon in Sweden, eventually comprising an HQ, 1st 4th Light and 5th Heavy Battalions; services; civil police; a naval unit; and a dive-bomber squadron with SAAB 17c aircraft. Too late for active combat, the brigade reached Denmark on 5 May 1945 to disarm surrendered German troops, and disbanded on 10 July.

Danish volunteers made up in courage what they lacked in numbers, and went a considerable way to avenge their country's humiliating defeat in 1940.

## BELGIUM

On 10 May 1940 the 650,000-strong Belgian Army, 22 divisions in eight Army Corps, and the 425-strong Luxembourg Volunteer Company, were attacked by four German Armies (4th, 6th, 12th, 16th) with 65 divisions. Belgium's determined defence lasted 18 days, but on 28 May King Leopold III surrendered his forces and became a prisoner-of-war. He had not consulted his government (then in France and from 22 October in London under Prime-Minister Pierlot), and his warnings did not reach his French and British allies in time.

On 25 May 1940 Lt. Gen. van Strijdonck de Burkel organised a camp at Tenby, South Wales, for Belgian troops rescued from Dunkirk, and on 12 August established the 'Belgian Forces in Great Britain' (FBGB) with a staff, pioneer battalion (2 companies), depot, park, military labour company and the 'Belgian Combat Unit' (4 platoons)—on 24 September redesignated 1st Fusilier Company, on 12 October 1st Fusilier Battalion, of 825 men in 3 companies (A–C).

On 1 July 1941 the 2nd Fusilier Battalion began to form around the newly arrived 'Belgian Division in Canada', 186 men being recruited in February at Cornwall Camp, Ontario, as 'A' Company. The 1st Belgian Field Artillery Battery (2 troops) was established on 8 February 1941, and in March 1944 Luxembourg volunteers formed the 3rd Troop. On 14 June the 1st Belgian Armoured Car Squadron (company-strength) was formed with Humber, later Daimler, vehicles. On 12 June the FBGB moved to Great Malvern, and on 8 August Lt. Gen. Daufresne de la Chevalerie assumed command, de



*J. W. Michael Iversen (right), recruiting officer for Danes in Great Britain, and the first Dane to join the British forces, who became a captain in The Buffs on 1 January 1941. He*

*talks to a Danish pilot officer in the RAF Volunteer Reserve, June 1942. (Museum of Denmark's Fight for Freedom 1940–5)*

Burkel becoming Inspector-General of Belgian Troops.

On 20 November 1942 the two fusilier battalions became independent motorised battalions. The FBGB was reorganised on 12 December 1942 into 1st Group (Lt. Col. Piron), with 3 independent motorised companies, artillery battery, armoured car squadron, 1st Belgian Field Engineer Company (formed October 1943), transport and medical services; and 2nd Group with depot, administration and training units. 1st Group, on 21 January 1943 renamed 1st Belgian Brigade, manned coastal defences at Lowestoft, Ramsgate and Great Yarmouth; and on 27 July 1944 became the Independent Belgian Brigade, under Col. Piron.

On 8 August 1944 the Brigade landed at Arromanches, Normandy, joining the Netherlands Brigade in the steady coastal advance, reaching Belgium on 3 September, and entering Brussels on the 4th. Subsequently it fought in the southern Netherlands before returning to Belgium on 6 December to reorganise into 1st 3rd Infantry Battalions; Transport Company; 1st Artillery Regiment 'Clercken' (3 two-battery battalions), formed 16 December; 1st Armoured Car Regiment (1st 4th





*Lt. Gen. van Strijdonck de Burkel, commanding Belgian forces in Great*

*Britain, at a parade in 1940 wearing officer's service uniform.*

Squadrons), formed 6 December, on 8 March 1946 redesignated 1st Guides Regiment. On 20 December the Engineer Company became 1st Engineer Battalion and left the brigade.

On 3 April 1945 the brigade returned to the Netherlands, 1st and 3rd Battalions fighting at Nijmegen, the 2nd at Walcheren. From 15 May to December it served in Germany on occupation duties and on 8 March 1946 the 1st Battalion became the present 'Liberation' Battalion of the Army.

Between October 1944 and June 1945, 57 new Fusilier Battalions (1 39, 45-62), 4 Engineer (1-4), 4 Pioneer (1-4) 34 Motor Transport Battalions, and 40 other units were formed in newly liberated Belgium. Most served in the US, British and Canadian Armies on guard duties, but about 20 Fusilier Battalions saw combat 1st 3rd in the Netherlands,

4th on the Rhine, 5th at the Battle of the Bulge, 6th at Remagen, 7th at Plzen, Czechoslovakia. From December 1944 the 48 remaining Fusilier Battalions formed into 16 Fusilier Brigades (10th 22nd, 26th 28th), becoming Army infantry regiments in March 1946. Five Infantry Brigades (2nd 6th), formed from December 1944 to June 1945 and trained in Northern Ireland, returned to Belgium in late 1945 to form the 1st and 2nd Infantry Divisions for occupation duties in Germany.

4 (Belgian) Troop, 10th (Inter-Allied) Commando, was established in June 1942 with HQ, A (Flemish) and B (Walloon) Platoons, operating with 6 (Polish) Troop in Algeria in September 1943, in Italy on the Sangro and Garigliano Rivers and at Anzio, and from March 1944 with Force 133 on Vis island, Yugoslavia. Returning to England in June, it fought with 5 (Norwegian) Troop on Walcheren island in November, returning to England in January 1945 to join 9 (Belgian) and 10 (Belgian) Troops, formed in late 1944 from 327 ex-Resistance fighters. In May 1945 all three Troops operated in Germany under British 4th Commando Brigade, rounding up German war-criminals and Belgian Waffen-SS men. On 15 May they formed the 'Commando Regiment'; and on 1 April 1951 became 2nd Commando Battalion, Para-Commando Regiment.

On 8 May 1942 120 volunteers from 'A' Company, 2nd Fusilier Battalion, FBGB, formed 'D' (Parachute) Company, in June redesignated Independent Belgian Parachute Company, from 12 July under Capt. Blondeel. On 4 February 1944 it joined the British SAS Brigade as its 5th Squadron (HQ, A and B Troops), and in March became 5th SAS Regiment (battalion-strength). From July 1944 it dropped into northern France on three reconnaissance, sabotage and resistance-liaison missions; in August operated in German-occupied Ardennes and Limbourg, and later in the Netherlands, helping Arnhem survivors reach Allied lines. In May 1945 it arrested top Nazis of the government of Admiral of the Fleet Doenitz, Hitler's successor. In late 1945 it became the Parachute Regiment, Belgian Army, and on 1 April 1951 1st Parachute Battalion, Para-Commando Regiment.

Belgian soldiers served in 'T' Section, SOE, and women were employed as Army nurses.

A number of men from the 640-strong Belgian Navy reached England in May 1940, and from 1942-5 formed the Belgian Section of the Royal Navy, which by May 1943 had 350 men operating seven minesweepers.

On 12 February 1941 the Belgian Section of the RAF was established. Some 1,200 Belgians served in the RAF, individually in squadrons, and in 350 Squadron (formed 17 November 1941) and 349 Squadron (formed 10 November 1942), flying Spitfires over Northern Europe, before joining the new Belgian Air Force on 15 and 24 October 1946 respectively.

In the Belgian Congo the Congolese Army, the Force Publique, mobilised three brigades in May 1940 against Italian forces in Ethiopia; and in February 1942 sent three contingents (BCS 1-3) to the Sudan, later helping in the invasion of Ethiopia. In June 1943 the 1st Belgian Colonial Motorised Brigade served at Suez, and from May to September 1944 in Palestine. From January 1941 to January 1946 a Field Hospital operated in Ethiopia, Somalia, Madagascar and Burma.

## THE NETHERLANDS

On 10 May 1940 the German 18th Army (11 divisions) attacked the Netherlands. The 270,000-strong Royal Netherlands Army, with nine divisions, fought more tenaciously than anticipated, but on the 14th Gen. Winkelman was forced to surrender.

Queen Wilhelmina established a government-in-exile in London and by June 1940 1,460 soldiers, who had escaped via Dunkirk or Bordeaux, had joined the 'Netherlands Legion' at Porthcawl, South Wales, with Maj. Gen. Noothoven van Goor as Inspector of Dutch Troops. A further 1,242 recruits came from Great Britain, Canada, the USA, South America and South Africa.

Units were established on 24 September, and on 11 January 1941 they became the Royal Netherlands Brigade, on 26 August receiving the title 'Prinses Irene' in honour of Wilhelmina's daughter. The



*Motorcyclists of the Belgian 1st Fusilier*

*Battalion on exercise in South Wales, 1940.*

1,584 men, under Col. Phaff, later Col. van Voorst Evekink, formed 1st Battalion; 2nd (Depot) Battalion; Reconnaissance Battalion, with paramilitary police (Koninklijke Marechaussee) in armoured cars; transport, medical, repair and military police units. The brigade was based from May 1941 at Wrotesley Park, near Wolverhampton.

Subsequent reassignments reduced the brigade to only 519 men. In September 1941 250 men left for Surinam, South America; and in January 1942 Col. van Voorst Evekink formed the advance-party of reinforcements for the Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia), but the colony fell on 8 March to the Japanese, and it diverted to Colombo, Ceylon. In March 1942 69 police left to form Queen Wilhelmina's bodyguard. The Independent Parachute Company, established December 1940, trained brigade volunteers as paratroops.

On 1 January 1943 the brigade, since 6 January 1942 under Lt. Col. de Ruyter van Stevekinck, reformed as a motorised brigade with Staff, HQ, Reconnaissance Bn. (132 men); three infantry companies redesignated I-III Combat Groups (each 240 men); artillery battery (92 men); and transport and repair units (73 men) — a total of 1,428 men. From September the brigade guarded the Essex coast, and in April 1944 II Combat Group was brought up to strength with 101 Dutch Marines from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, USA.

The brigade landed in Normandy on 4 August





*HM Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, escorted by Capt. Mulders, visits Dutch commandos at Port Madoc, North Wales, 1943. Mulders wears 'No. 10 Commando' title over*

*national patch and Combined Ops. badge (Sectie Militaire Geschiedenis Landmachtstaf, Den Haag)*

1944, serving until May 1945 with different British divisions of Gen. Montgomery's 21st Army Group. It advanced rapidly along the French coast, through Belgium, and on 21 September crossed into the Netherlands as part of 'Operation Market Garden', the unsuccessful northern advance to relieve British airborne forces at Arnhem. After guard duties west of Nijmegen the brigade headed westwards, taking part in attacks on Walcheren and Nord-Beveland islands, before spending the winter guarding the area. On 31 March 1945 the Marines were reassigned, forcing the disbandment of the Reconnaissance Bn. to provide replacements for II Combat Group. Finally on 10 April the brigade advanced northwards with British 116th Marine Brigade, capturing Hedel and holding it against counterattacks, then liberating the capital, The Hague, on 8 May.

On 13 July 1945 the brigade disbanded, reforming on 15 April 1946 as a regiment, and on 12 March 1952 received its present title—'Prinses Irene Guards Fusilier Regiment'.

On 22 March 1942 84 volunteers from the brigade formed 2 (Dutch) Troop, joining 10th (Inter-Allied) Commando on 16 July. After extensive commando training the Troop, under Capt. Linzel, embarked in December 1943 for India for a planned invasion of Sumatra. The attack was cancelled and the Troop returned to England in August 1944, although five volunteers fought in the successful Arakan campaign in northern Burma in February. The Troop fought in September at Arnhem, in November at Vlissingen (Flushing) and, after reforming in England, guarded dykes in the southern Netherlands in April 1945. It disbanded in October 1945, reforming at Roosendaal on 12 September 1950 as the Commando Corps regiment.

The SOE organised the Netherlands Special Operations unit, code-named 'Korps Insulinde', formed in May 1942 in Colombo, Ceylon, from volunteers from Col. van Voorst Evekink's advance-party. About 50 strong, it carried out guerrilla raids on Japanese-occupied Sumatra from 1943 as part of the British-Netherlands 'Anglo-Dutch Country Section' unit, later part of British 'Force 136'. Dutch soldiers served in SOE's 'N' Section (suffering catastrophic failures from 1941–April 1944 as a result of Abwehr successes in penetrating parties after their landing in Holland); and the Dutch 'B1' (Intelligence) and 'BVT' (subversion) sections.

The Royal Netherlands Navy in May 1940 counted 11,750 men (including marines) and 75 vessels, under Vice-Admiral Furstner. Furstner escaped to England and established the Dutch Naval Squadron with 51 ships and 6,500 men. In addition the large Merchant Navy contributed about 1,500 ships. The élite Netherlands Marine Corps (Korps Mariniers) fought the Germans in May 1940, the Japanese in 1941–2, and provided colonial garrisons on the Netherlands Antilles and in Surinam. The Marine Brigade, training since 16 May 1943 at Camp Lejeune with the US Marines, was not ready in time to fight the Japanese but, 4,500 strong, saw action in Java from December 1945 against Indonesian nationalist forces.

Royal Netherlands Naval Air Service personnel manned 320 and 321 Squadrons RAF in Coastal Command; but on 18 January 1941 the squadrons amalgamated, and a new 321 Squadron, eventually

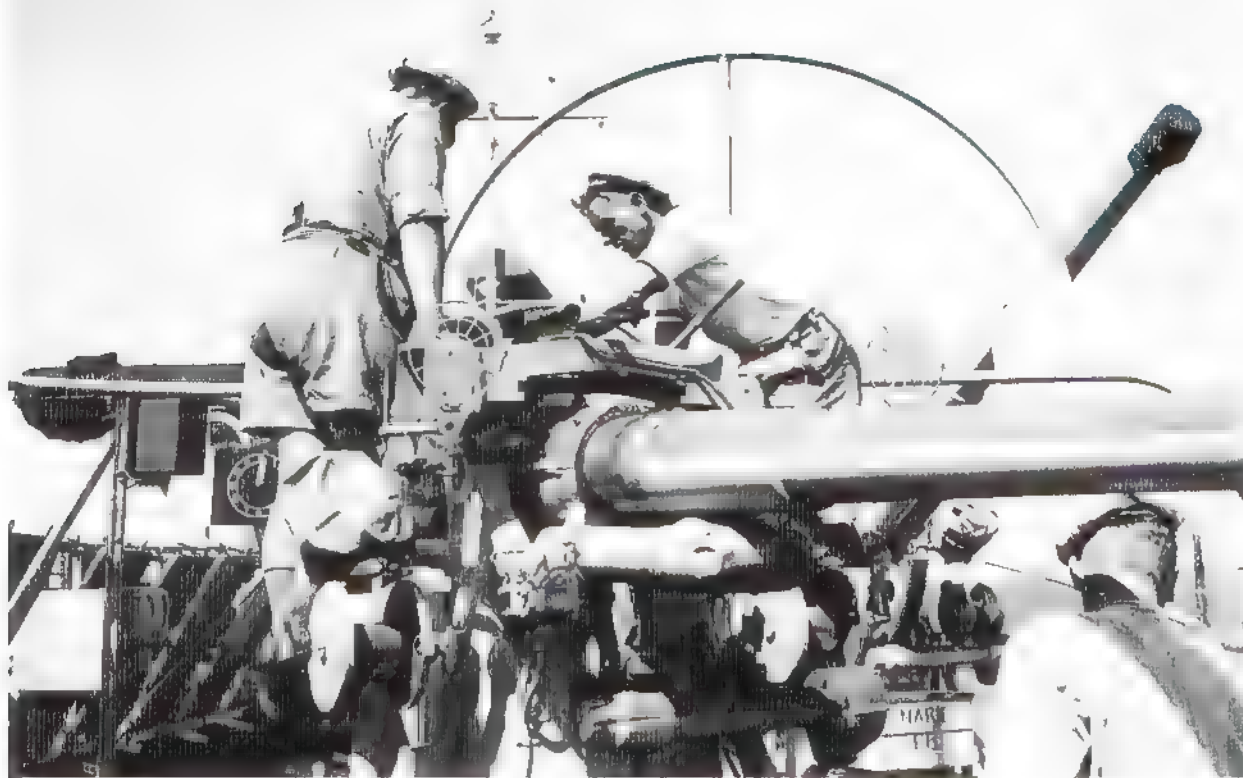
Two parachute-trained Dutch liaison officers, Lts. R. Fack (left) and B. Dubois, in 'Prinses Irene' Brigade uniform with the maroon beret and orange parachute sleeve badge, they are seen with a British Intelligence Corps captain, Normandy, 4 August 1944. (Sectie Militaire Geschiedenis Landmachtstaf, Den Haag)



Dutch commandos en route to a weapons demonstration, 11 March 1943. Note the 10 Commando vehicle sign; and corporal (centre) with British PTT's sword badge high on right sleeve. (Sectie Militaire Geschiedenis Landmachtstaf, Den Haag)







*A gun-crew of a Royal Netherlands Navy battleship on patrol in the*

*Atlantic, 1943. (Afdeling Maritieme Historie van de Marinestaf, Den Haag)*

flying B-25 Mitchell bombers, formed on 15 August 1942 in Ceylon. From August 1942 Army Air Service personnel manned 'A' Flight, 167 Fighter Squadron, reforming on 12 June 1943 as the all-Dutch 322 Squadron, flying Spitfires; 860 Naval Squadron flew Swordfish torpedo-bombers. In 1943 ex-Netherlands East Indies Air Corps aircrews formed 18 Squadron RAAF, in Australia.

## FRANCE

The Franco-German Armistice of 25 June 1940 signalled the defeat of the French armed forces after 47 days' fighting. The Germans occupied northern France, leaving the south the 'Free Zone' and

colonies, to Marshal Pétain's collaborationist government at Vichy. Pétain controlled the 100,000-strong 'Armistice Army' in the Free Zone; 96,000 'Transition Army' in North Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia); 33,000 men in West and Equatorial Africa; 14,000 in Djibouti and Madagascar; 35,000 in the Levant (Lebanon, Syria); and 63,000 in Indo-China. These troops may be loosely described as pro-Pétain, pro-American, anti-British and anti-German.

On 18 June 1940 Brig. Gen. Charles de Gaulle, newly appointed Under-Secretary for War, anticipating the imminent defeat, broadcast from London to all Frenchmen to fight under his leadership; but only 1,300 of the 20,000 French troops then in England responded, the rest opting for repatriation to France. These volunteers 900 of whom were Foreign Légionnaires from the 13th Half-Brigade (13DBLE), including 600 Spanish Republicans, who had fought in the unsuccessful Norwegian cam-

paign paraded in London on 1 July 1940 as the 'Légion de Gaulle', later redesignated Free French Forces (Forces Libres Françaises) -FFL.

De Gaulle's initially weak position improved in late August when Equatorial Africa Chad, Cameroun, Middle Congo, Oubangi-Chari, later Gabon joined him, forming in October four Bataillons de Marche (Special Duty Battalions) BM1 4, black troops with white officers. Confident that West Africa would also join, de Gaulle sent 14DBLE (13DBLE's temporary redesignation until November); 1st Marine Bn. (1<sup>st</sup>BFM), formed 10 July from Free French sailors in England; and 1st Tank Co. to Senegal, leaving 2nd Marine Bn., Light Infantry (Chasseurs) Bn. (disbanded 8 December to provide officer cadres) and some artillery in England. The 1,445-strong expeditionary force reached Dakar on 23 September but withdrew to Cameroun when fired on by the pro-Vichy authorities.

On 27 June 1940 elements of 24th Colonial Inf. Regt. joined from Syria, reforming in Ismā'iliya, Egypt, as 1st Marine Infantry Bn. (1<sup>st</sup>BIM) on 22 June. In December the 1st Company fought with British 7th Armoured Division at Buq Buq, Egypt, and with 2nd Company, helped take Tobruk in January 1941.

In December Col. Monclar formed the 1,200-strong Brigade d'Orient from 3 Co./1<sup>st</sup>BIM, 1 Bn./13DBLE (called 1<sup>st</sup>BLE) and 1 Sqdn./1st Moroccan Spahi Regt. (1<sup>st</sup>RSM), which had come from Syria on 30 June. From January to May 1941 the brigade fought in Eritrea, and the Spahis carried out the last French cavalry charge, against Italian mounted troops.

On 25 May 1941 the brigade-strength 1st Free French Light Division was formed at Quastina, near Tel Aviv, under Maj. Gen. Legentilhomme. The 5,400 men -2,000 French, 3,400 légionnaires, Africans and Arabs- formed 1st Brigade (BM1 & 2, 1<sup>st</sup>BLE), 2nd Brigade (BM3 & 4, 1<sup>st</sup>BIM); 1<sup>st</sup>BFM, 1st Tank Co., 1<sup>st</sup>RSM, 1st & 2nd Arty. Btys., and 100 ex-Vichy Circassian cavalry. On 8 June the Division invaded the Levant with other Allied forces, encountering unexpectedly fierce resistance from Vichy forces, who regarded them as traitors and British stooges, before entering Damascus on the 21st. The campaign ended on 11 July, but only



*A bugler corporal of the 1st French Marine Infantry Battalion in Palestine, 1941. Note the unit helmet-flash; corporal's two rank*

*bars surmounting bugler's braid on the pocket; and unofficial 'Sam Browne' belt.*

5,331 Vichy troops joined the Free French; 33,300 preferred repatriation to France.

The division was disbanded on 20 August, its battalions dispersing to garrisons in the Levant, later reforming as Free French Brigade Groups: 1<sup>st</sup>BFL (Brig. Gen. Koenig), formed December 1941 -2, 3BLE, BM2, BP1 (Pacific Islands Bn.), 1<sup>st</sup>BIM, 22CNA (North African Co., formed 1 Sept. 1941 from Vichy Arabs in Syria); 1<sup>st</sup>BFM, 1st Arty. Rgt. 2<sup>nd</sup>BFL (Brig. Gen. Cazaud), formed April 1942 -1BLE, BM3, 4, 5, 11; 21, 23CNA. 3<sup>rd</sup>BFL, formed 1st May 1942 BM6, 7, 9. Remained in the Levant.

On Christmas Day 1941 1<sup>st</sup>BFL joined British





*Legionnaire of the 13DBLE at Bir Hacheim, 1942: white-covered kepi, British battledress, with applied dark blue collar patches bearing green grenade. Note that at this date the 13DBLE still had MAS.36 rifles and French leather belts and pouches, but British web anklets. (Imperial War Museum)*



*A Free French brigadier-general wearing a khaki kepi and British khaki-drill bushjacket and shorts, being decorated by General de Gaulle, 1942.*

13th Corps in Egypt, and on 17 January 1942 helped capture Halfaya Pass. Ordered to Gazala, Libya, it diverted south to the desert outpost of Bir Hacheim, and on 27 May its 3,600 men met the full force of Rommel's offensive, withstanding repeated attacks before the 2,700 survivors broke through to British lines on 11 June. In recognition De Gaulle rechristened them 'Fighting French'.

1<sup>st</sup>BFL and 2<sup>nd</sup>BFL, which had been defending Garbut, near Tobruk, since July 1941, were reorganised in Egypt: 1<sup>st</sup>BFL—13DBLE (1 3BLE); 1<sup>st</sup>BIMP (BPI & 1<sup>st</sup>BIM combined as 'Marine and Pacific Bn. '); 1st Arty. Rgt.; 1<sup>st</sup>BFM; 22CNA. 2<sup>nd</sup>BFL BM5, 11; 21, 23CNA.

On 23 October 1942 they fought at El Alamein, 1<sup>st</sup>BFL and the 'Flying Column' (1st Tank Co., two recon bns. of 1<sup>st</sup>RSM) with British 7th Armd. Div., 2<sup>nd</sup>BFL with 50th Inf. Div., and by 4 November Rommel was in full retreat. The Flying Column advanced into Libya, but 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>BFL remained in Egypt; and on 1 February 1943 formed 1st Free French Division (1<sup>st</sup>DFL) under Maj. Gen. Koenig, with 4<sup>th</sup>BFL (BM21, 22, 24) joining from Djibouti on 16 February. On 8 May 1<sup>st</sup>DFL relieved British 51st Highland Div. in Tunisia.

Since January 1941 Col. de Hautecloque ('Leclerc') had been raiding Fezzan (Italian Southern Libya) with jeep-mounted Chadian Saharan troops, co-operating with the British Long Range Desert Group. In December 1942 he finally occupied Fezzan with the 'Chad African Rifles Regt.' (RTST), a motorised force of 55 French and 2,713 African troops. On 26 January 1943 Leclerc reached Tripoli, and on 15 March combined with the Flying Column at Mareth, Tunisia, as 'Force L'.

On 8 November 1942 British and US Forces stormed ashore in Morocco and Algeria and were unexpectedly opposed by the eight-division-strong Transition Army, before a ceasefire was called and all North and West African troops, under Gen. Giraud, joined the Allies. The Germans occupied southern France in retaliation, disbanding the Armistice Army, and poured troops into Tunisia. This was now attacked by British 1st Army, US 2nd Corps, ex-Vichy 19th Algerian Corps and 'Tunisian Troops High Command' from the west, and British 8th Army from the east. On 15 May they linked up, and the North African campaign was over.

The Fighting French rejected contact with the ex-Vichy troops, whom they despised as former col-

*Spahi junior officer or adjutant in North Africa, 1942: note red sidecap with braid chevron ranking on front of the crown.  
(Imperial War Museum)*



laborators; and so were 'exiled' to Libya, where Force L became 2<sup>e</sup>DFL, and on 24 August 2nd Armoured Division (2DB). A new French Army was constituted on 4 August 1943, and the terms 'Free French' and 'Fighting French' were officially abolished. The Army had eight infantry divisions: 1 motorised (1<sup>e</sup>DMI, but always known as 1<sup>e</sup>DFL); 1 Moroccan (2DIM); 1 Moroccan Mountain (4DMM); 3 Algerian (3, 7, 8DIA); 2 Colonial (9, 10DIC); and 4 armoured divisions (1, 2, 3, 5DB) plus 4 regimental-strength Groups of Moroccan Tabors (1-4GTM). 6 Commando battalions were formed, and on 5 January 1945 were redesignated

'Shock Battalions' (BC) organised in 3 'Shock Groups' (GC) as follows: 1<sup>e</sup>GC—1<sup>e</sup>BC (formed 25 May 1943 as Bataillon de Choc), 3<sup>e</sup>BC (formed May 1944 as Commandos de France); 2<sup>e</sup>GC—2<sup>e</sup>BC (formed April 1944 as Bataillon de Gayardon), 4<sup>e</sup>BC (formed September 1944 as Commando de Cluny); 3<sup>e</sup>GC—5<sup>e</sup>BC (formed 26 July 1943 as Commandos d'Afrique), 6<sup>e</sup>BC (formed 4 September 1944 as Commandos de Provence). The 1st Parachute Infantry Regt. (1<sup>e</sup>RCP), formed 1 May 1943 from ex-Vichy paratroopers, fought as infantry.

1st Corps (formed September 1943) liberated Corsica that month with 4DMM, 2GTM and the



Bataillon de Choc. From December 1943 1<sup>er</sup>DFL, 2DIM, 3DIA, 4DMM, and 1, 3, 4GTM fought in Italy as the French Expeditionary Corps (Gen. Juin), distinguishing themselves at Cassino and the Gothic Line before withdrawing in July 1944 for the invasion of southern France.

On 15 August 1944 'Army B' (redesignated 25 September 1st French Army) under Gen. de Lattre de Tassigny, with 1st Corps (2DIM, 4DMM, 9DIC, 5DB) and 2nd Corps (1<sup>er</sup>DFL, 3DIA, 1DB), landed in Provence and advanced northwards, recruiting new units from local resistance (FFI) battalions. Leclerc's 2DB, which had reached Normandy via Morocco and England, and had entered Paris on 25 August, fought under US command. The 1st Army advanced into south-west Germany, and by May 1945 had reached Tyrol, western Austria.

Most of the French Navy opted for Vichy in June 1940, but on 1 July Rear-Admiral Muselier estab-

lished the Free French Naval Forces (FNFL), the Merchant Marine (with 219 civilian ships) and the Air Force (FAFL). The FNFL began with three vessels and a few hundred men. On 2 July the British, afraid French ships might fall into German hands, impounded the 33 vessels in British ports (13 later transferred to the FNFL), and on the 3rd attacked the squadron at Mers-el-Kebir, Algeria, killing 1,297 French sailors. The FNFL, with 5,600 men, operated 68 ships before merging with ex-Vichy units on 4 August 1943 to form the new French Navy. Aeronavale (naval air arm) personnel served in the FAFL 'Ile de France' squadron, on the British aircraft-carrier HMS *Indomitable* and in the Mediterranean in the US-equipped 'Flotilla 6F'.

The FNFL formed 4 Marine (Fusiliers-Marins) battalions. 1st Marine Bn. (1<sup>er</sup>BFM) served initially as the anti-aircraft bn. of 1<sup>er</sup>DFL, and from 24 September 1943, as 1st Marine Rgt. (1<sup>er</sup>RFM) as the divisional armoured reconnaissance regiment. 2<sup>er</sup>BFM served



*French armour officers in Italy, 1944: (left) Col. Bonjour, commanding a Groupement Blindé and the 3rd Algerian Spahis, wearing the French armoured troops helmet with five rank bars painted on the brow pad, US herringbone twill coveralls, webbing and leggings; note gold-on-dark-blue rank patch on chest. (Right) Lt. Col. van Heek commanding 7th Chasseurs d'Afrique, 3rd Algerian Division, wearing US steel helmet, IIBT coverall with exposed buttons, and high laced boots; note gold and silver rank bars on blue chest patch. Both wear regimental fob badges on their left pockets. (Imperial War Museum)*

- 1 Desátník, Czechoslovak Infantry Bn. II-East,  
Tobruk, October 1942  
2 Divisní Generál Rudolf Viest, Czechoslovak Army in the West;  
England, 1943  
3 Stábní Kapitán, 1st Czechoslovak Independent Armoured  
Brigade; Dunkirk, October 1944







- 1 Porucznik, 1st Motorized Artillery Regt.,  
1st Polish Armoured Division; Breda,  
Netherlands, February 1945
- 2 Starszy Szeregowiec, 6 (Polish) Troop,  
10th (Inter-Allied) Commando;  
Monte Cassino, Italy, February 1944
- 3 Bosmanmat, Polish Navy;  
Mediterranean, July 1943



1 Oberstloytnant, Norwegian Training Group;  
Dumfries, Scotland, October 1940  
2 Menig, 2nd Mountain Company, Norwegian Brigade,  
Scotland, 1943  
3 Lt Anders Lassen, British Special Boat Squadron, 2SAS;  
Crete, June 1943





- 1 Soldat d'élite/Kuersoldat, 1st Belgian Brigade;  
England, February 1943
- 2 Capitaine-Commandant/Kapitein-Commandant, Independent  
Belgian Brigade, Belgium, September 1944
- 3 Adjutant, Independent Belgian Parachute Company;  
England, June 1943

- 1 Luitenant-Kolonel, Royal Netherlands Brigade 'Prinses Irene'; England, 1944  
 2 Kapitein, Royal Netherlands Brigade 'Prinses Irene'; Normandy, August 1944  
 3 Sergeant 1<sup>e</sup> klasse, 2 (Dutch) Troop, 10th (Inter-Allied) Commando; Arnhem, September 1944





- 1 Caporal, 1st French Marine Infantry Battalion;  
Quastina, Palestine, November 1941  
2 Général de Brigade Leclerc, Free French Flying Column;  
Tripoli, Libya, January 1943  
3 Second Maître, 1st French Marine Commando Battalion,  
Ouistreham, Normandy, June 1944



- 1 Commandant, 3rd Free French Fighter Squadron 'Normandie';  
Orel, USSR, July 1943  
2 Kaplar, 1st Battalion, Yugoslav Royal Guards;  
Alexandria, Egypt, March 1942  
3 Potpukovnik, General Staff, Royal Yugoslav Forces;  
Cairo, Egypt, June 1943







1 Tagmatarchis, 1st Greek Brigade; Egypt, June 1942  
 2 Ypolochagos, 3rd Greek Mountain Brigade;  
 Rimini, Italy, September 1944  
 3 Epilochias, Greek Sacred Company;  
 Aegean islands, July 1944

in Douala, Cameroun, from December 1940 and in Lebanon from November 1941, before disbanding in March 1943. 3<sup>e</sup>BFM, formed in England in January 1942 controversially from Latin-American volunteers, disbanded on 23 May. On 1 July 1941 Lt. Kieffer formed 1st Marine Company in England, after commando training redesignated in May 1942 1st Marine Commando Company (1<sup>e</sup>CFMC). It formed No. 1 Troop, 10th Inter-Allied Commando in July, followed in June 1943 by No. 8 Troop, formed with many ex-2<sup>e</sup>BFM marines. The two troops formed 1st Marine Commando Bn. (1<sup>e</sup>BFMC) under Kieffer. From November 1943 they raided the French, Belgian and Dutch coasts, and on 16 April 1944 were attached to British No. 4 Commando as No. 5 and No. 6 Troops. On D-Day they captured Ouistreham, with heavy losses, and from November to May 1945 operated in the Netherlands. The Marine Armoured Regt. (RBFM) was 2DB's AT regt..

After June 1940 Vichy retained 700–800 combat aircraft in the Free Zone and colonies. The FAFL, under Lt. Col. Pijcaud, from March 1941 Col. Valin, operated three fighter squadrons (GC1–3) and two bomber squadrons (GB1–2). GB1 'Lorraine' and GB2 'Bretagne' served in Libya, GC1 'Alsace' in Lebanon, Palestine and Libya; GC2 'Ile de France' in England. GC3 'Normandie', formed August 1942 in Syria, operated from November 1942 to May 1945 on the Eastern Front with Yak-1 and Yak-3 fighters, gaining in November 1944 the battle-honour 'Normandie-Niemen'. Other pilots served in RAF squadrons, including Pierre Clostermann, the leading French fighter ace with 32 'kills'. On 4 August 1943 FAFL and ex-Vichy units combined as the French Air Force, by May 1945 39 squadrons strong, including 12 serving in the RAF as 326–9 and 340–9 Squadrons.

There were two FAFL airborne units. 1st Air Infantry Company (1<sup>e</sup>CIA), formed 15 September 1940, carried out missions into occupied France; and in October 1941 became 1st Parachute Infantry Company (1<sup>e</sup>CCP), operating as the 'French SAS Squadron' in Libya, on 16 September 1942 capturing Benghazi. On 1 July 1943 it became 4th Air Infantry Bn. (4<sup>e</sup>BIA) in England, and on 7 January 1944 2nd Parachute Infantry Rgt. (2<sup>e</sup>RCP), also called 2SAS, joining the new SAS Brigade along



*French 1st Marine Commando Company soldiers in 1942 wearing sailors' caps and a Cross of*

*Lorraine sleeve badge as later worn from October 1942–April 1944 on the green beret.*

with 3<sup>e</sup>RCP (3SAS), formed in September 1942 as 3<sup>e</sup>BIA from ex-Vichy paratroopers in Morocco. In June 1944 2<sup>e</sup>RCP was fighting in Brittany, in December in the Ardennes in the 'Battle of the Bulge'; and in April 1945 joined 3<sup>e</sup>RCP, which had been operating in France since August 1944, in the Netherlands.

In July 1940 Capt. Dewavrin established the Free French Intelligence Service, known successively as Deuxième Bureau, SR and BCRA, for clandestine missions into France. In late 1943 BCRA combined with ex-Vichy North African Intelligence to form DGSS, which on 1 January 1944 combined with SOE sections 'RF' (Gaullist) and 'F' (British) to form the EMFFI under Maj. Gen. Koenig. In addition about 5,000 women served in the FFL and 100 in the FNFL, the first Frenchwomen to wear military uniform.



By August 1943, the official date of abolition, the Free French Armed Forces had probably never exceeded 18,000 men, about half of these being Arabs, Africans or légionnaires, but they had helped repair France's damaged military reputation, and had won for Gen. de Gaulle the authority to claim an influential position in post-war Europe.

## YUGOSLAVIA

The Royal Yugoslav Forces surrendered on 17 April 1941 after 11 days' resistance against overwhelming German, Italian and Hungarian forces. Many Yugoslav troops joined 'Chetnik' guerrilla units in the mountains established by Col. Dragoljub 'Draža' Mihailović, or later the rival Communist 'Partisan' forces of Josip 'Tito' Broz.

On 21 June 1941 the 17-year-old King Petar II established his government-in-exile in London, with Air Force Gen. Dušan Simović as Prime Minister; and, in Cairo, where 1,000 personnel had assembled, the 'Royal Yugoslav Forces' with Gen. Bogoljub Ilić as Defence Minister and Chief-of-Staff and Gen. Borivoje Mirković as Air Force commander. In January 1942 rival officers persuaded Petar to dismiss Simović, Ilić and Mirković, causing a mutiny amongst Mirković's supporters. Mihailović

was appointed to Ilić's offices 'in absentia', with Gen. Petar Živković deputising in London and Cairo; but the British were exasperated by the Yugoslav intrigues and accepted Tito's accusations of Mihailović's collaboration with the enemy. They prevented expansion of the Royal Yugoslav forces, allowed Tito's agitators to penetrate their ranks, and in August 1944 forced Mihailović's dismissal. Now backing Tito, they pressured Petar to broadcast on 12 September 1944 to all Yugoslavs to join the Partisans, abolished his government on 7 March 1945 and disbanded the Royal Yugoslav Forces, giving personnel the choice of joining Tito or becoming refugees.

At Camp Agamy, Alexandria, the '1st Battalion, Royal Yugoslav Guards' was formed with 505 men, including 411 Slovenes conscripted into the Italian Army and taken prisoner, in a Headquarters and 4 rifle companies (A-D), under Maj. Živan Knežević, from January 1942 Lt. Col. Miloye Dinić. On 19 February 1942 Lt. Col. Milan Prosen assumed command, and began to turn the unit into an effective fighting force. In late February 1942 the battalion was ordered to Tobruk to relieve the Czechoslovak battalion, but diverted south to join 11th Brigade, 4th Indian Division, in the east Libyan desert. In April the battalion retreated to Halfaya ('Hellfire') Pass, then Mersa Matruh; and in July joined British 9th Army in Palestine, guarding



*Lt. Col. Milan Prosen, Yugoslav Royal Guards Battalion commander, wearing battledress with, behind him, a picture of Gen. Mihailović in early 1941 as a General Staff Colonel. (Col. (rtd.) M. Prosen)*

the Haifa oil refinery. In January 1943 Lt. Col. Franc Stropnik assumed command of the 850-strong, well-trained, battle-ready battalion in 25th Brigade, 10th Indian Division; but by late 1943 it was degenerating into pro-Petar and pro-Tito factions. Reaching Italy in March 1944 with the division, but now barely at company strength, it was disbanded. Meanwhile Col. Prosen, having recruited about 2,000 Slovene ex-POWs in Algiers, was refused British transport to bring them to the Cairo depot, and the men were allocated labour duties.

After September 1941 Yugoslavs accompanied British SOE agents on liaison missions to Chetnik and Partisan forces, and on 20 August 1942 7 (Yugoslav) Troop, 10th (Inter-Allied) Commando was formed with 26 men under Lt. Keravin. The Troop fought in November 1943 in Italy with 2nd Special Service Brigade, and in February 1944 with Force 144, supporting the Partisans from Vis island, before disbanding in April.

From April 1941 105 Royal Yugoslav Navy personnel, under Commander Z. V. Adamić, joined the British Mediterranean Fleet at Alexandria. Motor Torpedo Boats *Durmitor* and *Kajmakčalan* operated against Vichy Syria in June, with the submarine *Nebojša* relegated to training. The eight Dornier Do22k and two Rogožarski SIM-XIV-H floatplanes of the Naval Air Squadron, reformed at Aboukir on 3 June as 2 (Yugoslav) Squadron, under 270 Squadron RAF, fought in Crete, and patrolled the North African coast before disbandment on 23 April 1942. In late 1943 the Navy, under Capt. I. Kern, operated ex-Yugoslav MTBs *T.1* and *T.5* and minelayers *Melnje*, *Miljet* and *Villa* from Malta under Commander J. Saksida, and from Livorno eight ex-US Navy *Higgins* MTBs and ex-Royal Navy corvette *Nada*; but in March 1945 all ships assembled at Ancona before transferring to Tito in August.

The 11 Royal Yugoslav Air Force aircraft which reached Alexandria in April 1941 were requisitioned by the RAF. The 346 grounded personnel and 57 Royal Guards (including Lt. Col. Dinić) were interned at Torah camp in March 1942 following the pro-Mirković mutiny and on 2 July reformed as '244 Temporary Battalion, King's Own Royal Regiment', only to be disbanded in November 1943



Yugoslav NCOs, such as Sgt. Josip Zmajila, in their officers' peaked caps, Sam Browne belt and shoulder pips, were easily

mistaken for officers by the British, necessitating the introduction of British sleeve chevrons in late 1941. (Aleksa Gavrilović)

following another mutiny instigated by pro-Tito agitators. Personnel transferred to the Royal Guards, and 224 men joined the new 'Balkan Air Force' in Libya, forming, with Partisan volunteers, 352 Squadron RAF (formed 22 April 1944) and 351 Squadron (formed 1 July 1944) flying Hurricanes and Spitfires in support of Tito, before disbandment on 15 June 1945. From October 1943 50 airmen trained in the USA flew four Liberator bombers into Yugoslavia from US 15th Air Force bases in Italy.

## GREECE

Since 28 October 1940 the Greek Army, under Lt. Gen. Papagos, by March 1941 fielding 21 divisions, had, as Great Britain's last European ally, successfully resisted the attack of 27 Italian divisions in Epirus, north-west Greece; but, despite an Allied force of two-plus divisions in support could not prevent nine German divisions breaking through





*King George II of Greece, wearing pre-war service uniform in Cairo, June 1941.*

from Yugoslavia on 7 April 1941. On 1 June the remaining Greek and Allied forces surrendered after a last stand on Crete against German airborne units.

King George II reached Egypt in May, and from June 1941 to November 1944 commanded the 'Royal Greek Armed Forces of the Middle East' from personnel who had escaped from Greece and volunteering Greeks resident overseas. On 23 June 1941 the Army commander, Lt. Gen. Tzanakakasis, formed the 1st Greek Brigade, under Brig. Katsotas, in Palestine: 4,500 men in 1st-3rd Infantry Battalions, 1st Artillery Regiment (battalion-strength), 1st Engineer and 1st Machine-Gun Companies; and 1st Medical Battalion. The 1st Independent Armoured Regiment (battalion-strength), formed with jeep-mounted recoilless guns, was later absorbed after heavy losses into 1st Artillery Regiment. On 27 July 1942 the 2nd Brigade was established (5th-7th Inf. Bns., 2nd Arty. Regt., etc) at Almiriya Camp, Egypt; later also the 4th and 8th Independent Infantry Battalions. 1st Brigade fought well at El Alamein from 23 October to 4 November 1942, in the British 50th Infantry Division, but remained in Egypt when the division advanced into Libya.



*Greek Sacred Company troops disembark from a fishing-boat in the Aegean, 1944. Cap comforters were popular and practical field headgear.*



*A member of the Greek Sacred Company prepares to go out on patrol in the Libyan desert, 1943.*

In mainland Greece the Communist-dominated 'National Liberation Front' (EAM), established September 1941, formed its military wing, the 'National People's Liberation Army' (ELAS) in April 1942. EAM infiltrated agitators into the Greek Forces to stir up dissatisfaction with the king. They engineered riots in Cairo in March 1943 and in Palestine in July amongst the 1st and 2nd Brigades, then part of British 9th Army. Finally, on 4 April 1944, the 1st Brigade mutinied at Almiriya, only surrendering on 24th when surrounded by British troops. The brigade was disbanded immediately, reforming on 4 June with 3,500 loyal troops as the 3rd Greek Mountain Brigade ('Mountain' was a courtesy title; all Greek infantry were mountain-trained). The 2nd Brigade and other units were disbanded and interned in camps in Libya, Egypt and Eritrea. In August 3rd Brigade embarked for Italy, joining 1st Canadian Division, with which it breached the Gothic Line and entered Rimini after heavy fighting on 21 November.

On 14 October 1944 British and Indian troops

landed in Greece to prevent ELAS seizing power after the departure of the Germans. In November the Greek National Guard was formed, spearheaded by 3rd Brigade, which arrived in December from Italy, and, later in 1945, the new Greek Army was established. Believing ELAS to have surrendered, Allied troops left Athens in January 1945; but it was not until 16 October 1949 that Field Marshal Papagos finally defeated Communist units holding out in northern Greece.

A 'Sacred Company' (*Hieros Lochos*), traditionally raised when Greece is in mortal danger (first formed in 379 BC against Sparta, then in 1821 against Turkey) was established on 6 September 1942 by the charismatic and outspoken Col. Khristodoulos Tsigantes from 140 officers in Egypt. On 25 November it joined the British 1st SAS Regiment at Kabrit Camp near Cairo; and from 24 January 1943 carried out commando raids along the North African coast, supporting 8th Army, then attacking German forces

in Tunisia in April. Absorbed into Raiding Forces Middle East it expanded, by accepting NCO enlistments, into a 246-man battalion (with 1st 3rd Commando Units, each divided into five-man Combat Teams). From September 1943 to May 1945 German and Allied forces fought to occupy Italian-controlled Greek Aegean islands, and on 30 October 1943 the Company parachuted onto Samos to reinforce the beleaguered British garrison, but all were forced to evacuate on 14 November. Reorganised as a 931-man Commando Regiment the Sacred Company (the traditional title was never changed) carried out 14 seaborne raids from March to October 1944. From 14 October to 13 December it sustained high casualties in Athens against ELAS, then undertook five more Aegean operations, culminating in the occupation of Rhodes in May 1945. The company left British service on 31 July, returning to Greece to retrain as 'Mountain Raid

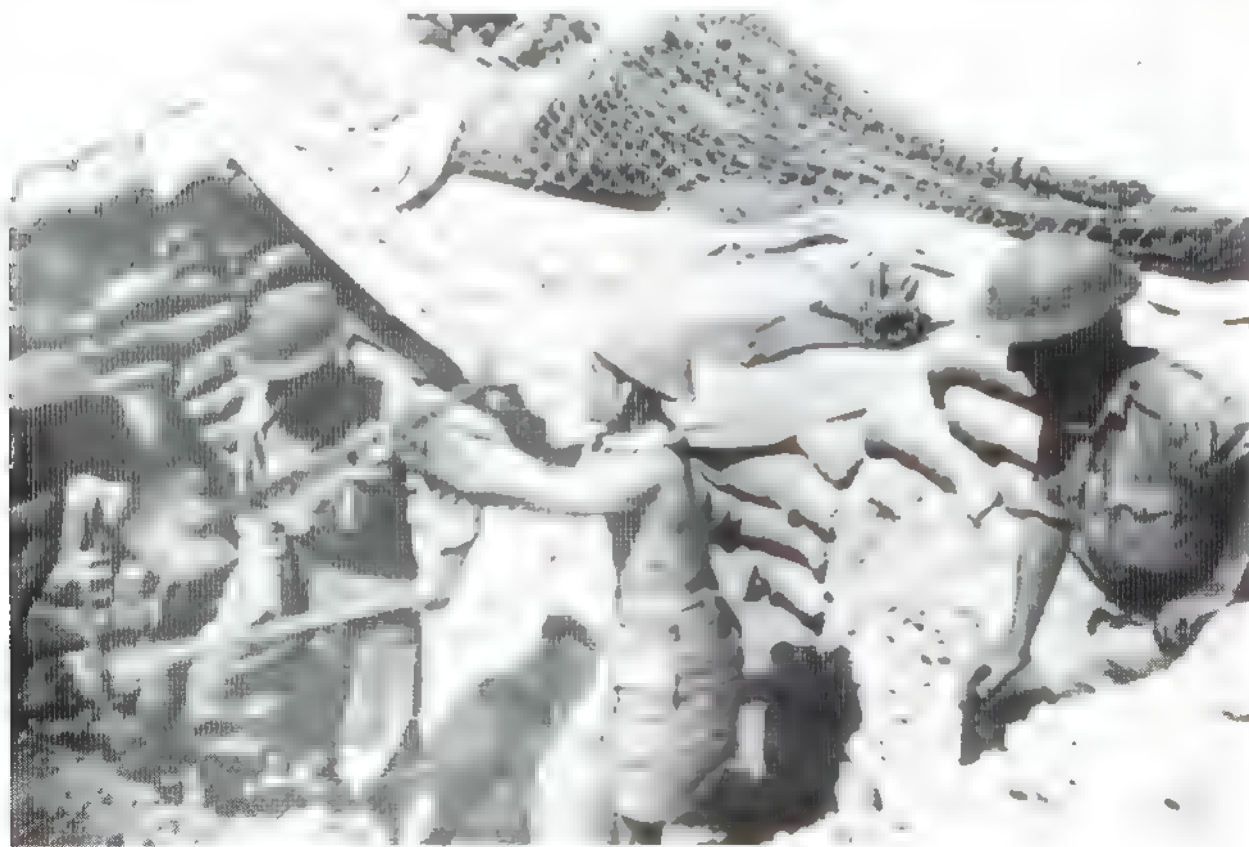
Companies', the forerunners of the Greek Commando Forces. Greek servicemen also accompanied SOE missions to the various Greek resistance organisations.

Vice-Admiral Sakelleriou, commanding the Royal Greek Navy, escaped to Egypt in July 1941 with 17 ships and 2,883 men. Based at Alexandria, the Navy received ships from the US and Royal Navies, until it was the largest Allied navy in the Mediterranean after the Royal Navy, responsible for 80% of non-RN escort operations and all minesweeping in the Eastern Mediterranean. It supported the Sicily landings in July 1943, Anzio in January 1944, and Normandy in June 1944. The huge Merchant Navy performed transport duties. In April 1944 43 naval and merchant ships mutinied, but were retaken by loyal Greek sailors who lost 50 dead. Vice-Admiral Voulgaris assumed command, and sailed the fleet, now 44 ships and 8,551 men, back to Greece in October 1944.

The Royal Greek Air Force, under Lt. Gen. Nikolaides, operated three squadrons with the RAF. 13th Naval Reconnaissance Squadron escaped intact

*Troops of 1st Greek Brigade dig in for the battle of El Alamein, October 1942. The*

*sergeant, extreme right, wears pre-war rank insignia: two gold chevrons on infantry-red backing.*





to Cairo in June 1941, and carried out anti-submarine patrols with Ansons and Blenheims, and later, as a bomber squadron, with Baltimores. 335 and 336 Fighter Squadrons RAF, formed 10 October 1941 and 25 February 1943 respectively, flew Spitfires in the desert, Italy and Yugoslavia, and from November 1944 in the Aegean from Greek bases. They transferred to the Royal Greek Air Force on 31 July 1945.

In 1949 peace came after nine years of war; but the Greek armed forces, exhausted but triumphant, were dismayed that their sacrifices and achievements in Epirus, the Middle East, Italy and the Aegean from 1940 to 1945 had been overshadowed in the eyes of their wartime allies by the bloody tragedy of the 1944–9 Civil War.

## THE PLATES

### **11: Desátník, Czechoslovak Infantry Bn. 11—East; Tobruk, October 1942**

In the Middle East all ranks wore British khaki drill shirts and shorts in field uniform, with Mk II steel or pith helmets, with circular or rectangular national flags respectively on both sides. Field officers (Plukovník, Podplukovník, Major, Štábní Kapitán) wore 4–1 gold five-pointed stars on shoulder-loops with gold braided vertical edges; company officers (Kapitán, Nadporučík, Poručík, Podporučík), 4–1 stars only; warrant officers (Praporčík, Štábní Rotmistr, Rotmistr) 4–2 silver stars on a branch-colour centre stripe; NCOs (Rotný, Četař, Desátník, Svobodník), 4–1 silver studs placed horizontally on a branch-colour base patch; Private (Vojín) a plain strap. The pre-war sidecap carried rank stars (field officers added a gold bar underneath) and studs behind a lion-embossed shield—all metal gold for officers, silver for WOs, bronze for lower ranks. Note the obsolete British M1908 webbing, the red national title, and the traditional Austro-Hungarian style of shouldering arms.

### **12: Divisní Generál Rudolf Viest, Czechoslovak Army in the West; England, 1943**

Officers and WOs adopted the French service tunic in late 1939 with plain collars and rank insignia on

branch-colour piped shoulder straps: generals (Divisní Generál and Brigádní Generál Armádní Generál not held 1939–45), 3–2 gold stars on the cuff and gold line-leaf shoulder strap embroidery. On the peaked cap a gold lion-embossed shield on a rhombus on crossed swords, in silver for WOs; generals had gold lime-leaf peak embroidery. Khaki drill tunics in the Middle East carried the unique battalion collar badge. In England generals added collar patches, and in 1943 adopted new rank insignia: 2–1 gold stars above crossed swords on field officers' shoulder straps piped red, omitting peak embroidery and red trouser-stripes. Note the Advanced Military Academy graduate badge.

### **A3: Štábní Kapitán, 1st Czechoslovak Independent Armoured Brigade; Dunkirk, October 1944**

Czechoslovak troops in France wore French field uniforms with Czechoslovak insignia, and in England battledress with branch-coloured shoulder strap piping. Colours were: generals, artillery—red; infantry, armour motorised infantry—yellow; engineers—dark brown; signals—light brown; medical—black. In 1943 armoured battalions adopted the RAC black beret and AFV helmet, other units the khaki general service cap. Note the brigade formation sign. In the USSR battledress was eventually superseded by the Polish khaki field tunic, branch-colours were not worn, and a senior WO rank (Štábní Praporčík) was added, with a silver star on a silver braid edged shoulder strap.

### **B1: Porucznik, 1st Motorised Artillery Regt., 1st Polish Armoured Division; Brede, Netherlands, February 1945**

Officers wore French or British service tunics with the 'Rogatywka' peaked cap, although armoured, lancer, hussar and mounted rifle regiments usually preferred the black beret; paratroopers wore light grey, commandos green berets. Silver rank insignia was worn on the cap band and shoulder straps: generals (General Broni Dwiżji Brygady Marszałek Polski rank not held October 1939–May 1945), 3–1 stars and zig-zag embroidery, with embroidery repeated on cuffs; field officers (Pułkownik, Podpułkownik, Major), 3–1 stars, two braids; company officers (Kapitan, Porucznik, Podporucznik) 3–1



*A lieutenant-colonel of the Polish Carpathian Lancers, the reconnaissance regiment of the 2nd Arm'd. Div., at Pessaro, Italy. He has the silver national badge on his black beret, and—obscured here—the rank insignia of two stars above a double bar; the beret also*

*bore red regimental piping around the top of the brow band. Ranking is worn in silver metal on the shoulder straps of the KD bush-shirt, and note collar patches—cavalry pennons, in dark blue over crimson, with applied silver regimental badge of palms and crescent*

stars, one cap band braid. Strap insignia was also worn on the beret, to the left of, from February 1943 below, the eagle.

Branch affiliation was shown by coloured cap bands and collar patches—pentagonal (generals, infantry, paratroopers, commandos, light and AA artillery), triangular (anti-tank artillery, initially armour and mot. artillery), or 'swallow-tailed' (lancers, hussars, mounted rifles, dragoons, later armour, mot. artillery). However, each unit developed distinctive 'tribal items'. This officer wears a dark green artillery cap band, motorised artillery

collar patches, dark green unit lanyard, silver unit collar badge (intended to replace the shoulder strap numeral), the unofficial 'Troop of Death' honorary sleeve badge of 1st Troop, and the regimental officer's breast-badge. He has the *Virtuti Militari* 4th Class medal, Reserve Artillery Officer School graduate badge, divisional sleeve patch, and the left-hand black shoulder-strap of 10th Armoured Brigade, extended in February 1945 to the whole division. The white on red 'POLAND' title was worn on service and battledress by all ranks.

***B2: Starszy Szeregowiec, 6 (Polish) Troop, 10th (Inter-Allied) Commando; Monte Cassino, Italy, February 1944***

In the field all ranks wore British battledress, usually with collar patches (rhomboid shaped patches replacing pentagonal) and, unofficially, 'tribal items'. Khaki drill shirts worn with shorts and trousers in Italy and the Middle East omitted collar patches. Headgear was the British Mk II helmet, and the paratrooper and AFV versions, with yellow eagle badge; the khaki sidecap, replaced in 1943 by the general service cap, or the beret. Enlisted shoulder strap and beret rank insignia were: longitudinal gold braid stripe, point-up chevron on beret—'Aspirant' (rank introduced 1939/40 in France); other NCOs, white braid piped red; *Chorąży*, *Starszy Sierżant*, *Sierżant*—braid edged strap with silver star, 2-1 braid chevrons, point down on the beret silver star above red bar, 2-1 silver chevrons; *Plutonowy*, *Kapral*, *Starszy Szeregowiec*, 3-1 braid bars, silver beret bars; *Szeregowiec*—no insignia. This Bren-gunner wears the 1942 battle jerkin and standard 10 Commando insignia. In April 1944 the 'No. 10' was omitted from the title when 2nd Motorised Commando Battalion was formed.

***B3: Bosmanmat, Polish Navy; Mediterranean, July 1943***

French, Greek, Netherlands, Norwegian, Polish and Yugoslav naval personnel retained their national uniforms and insignia, occasionally adding virtually identical Royal Navy uniform items, whilst Belgian and Danish servicemen wore Royal Naval Reserve uniforms and insignia. Most wore national sleeve titles. Merchant Navy personnel wore national or company uniforms. Note the characteristic Polish

cap, the petty officer's rank stripes, and the gunner speciality badge.

**C1: Oberstlöytnant, Norwegian Training Group; Dumfries, Scotland, October 1940**

Officers' service dress was initially the Norwegian M1934 grey-green uniform, largely superseded by the British khaki uniform, usually omitting tunic shoulder straps. The first lion cap badge (probably a locally made Scottish lion intended to represent the Norwegian lion and axe) was replaced in 1941 by the M1934 cockade above a gold lion on red button connected by gold lace (generals) or two silver lace stripes, with red cap band for Oberst and above. The Generalmajor (highest wartime active rank) wore a large silver embroidered star on a gold-braid edged collar; field officers (Oberst, Oberstlöytnant, Major) 3-1 small silver metal stars on a thin silver-braid edged collar; company officers (Kaptein, Löytnant, Fenrik), 3-1 stars only. Some officers wore unofficial cuff rank insignia shown. The 'NORGE' title and flag were worn by all ranks. Bronzed buttons showed the Norwegian lion.

**C2: Menig, 2nd Mountain Company, Norwegian Brigade, Scotland, 1943**

Field uniform for all ranks was British battledress with officers' service dress rank insignia. NCOs wore a green horizontal bar above a vertical bar (Sersjant), or a vertical bar only (Korporal) on the shoulder strap; and from January 1943 British worsted insignia—Stabssersjant, Sersjant, Korporal, Vise-korporal, crown above 3 chevrons, then 3-1 chevrons point down. 1st-3rd Mountain Companies wore 1-3 black stripes below the 'North Cape' badge; commandos the 10th Commando title and Combined Operations badge; other units from summer 1943 British arm-of-service stripes only red (infantry); red-blue (artillery); green-yellow (reconnaissance). Headgear was the British Mk II helmet, or paratrooper and AFV versions; khaki sidecap with cockade above bronzed lion button

*1 sergeant (left) and 2nd lieutenant of 5 (Norwegian) Troop, 10 (IV) Commando. The officer wears the Sharpshooter pocket-badge, both*

*soldiers, the green beret with M1943 cap badge, and British parachute wings on the right cuff. (Sidsel Roine, Forsvarsmuseet)*

(with two green stripes for sergeants), replaced in 1943 by the maroon beret (paratroopers), green beret (commandos), black beret (reconnaissance) or khaki general service cap, with a white metal wreathed royal cypher ('H7') introduced February 1943.

**C3: Lt. Anders Lassen, British Special Boat Squadron, 2SAS; Crete, June 1943**

Danes wore British Army or Home Guard service uniform and battledress, some, though not all, wearing the white and red 'DANMARK' shoulder title, although the projected 'Danebrog' shield white cross on red shield—was not issued until after the war. Lassen, notoriously casual about uniform (he once entered a British officers' mess with 2nd lieutenant's 'pips' on one shoulder, lieutenant's on the other), wears the khaki drill uniform prescribed for the Mediterranean theatre, the famous beige SAS beret and badge, and scrubbed webbing, and has 'liberated' German sub-machine gun ammunition pouches for magazines for his Sten gun.

The Danish Brigade in Sweden wore grey Swedish Army uniforms with a Danebrog shield on the sides of the helmet.

**D1: Soldat d'élite/Keursoldaat, 1st Belgian Brigade; England, February 1943**

All ranks wore British battledress field uniform, the British Mk II steel helmet with the Belgian flag





painted on the left side (armoured car crews, a plain AFV helmet) or the khaki sidecap, superseded in 1943 by the khaki general service cap, or the beret (black for AFV crews), all carrying the Belgian lion badge, bronze for officers, brass for other ranks, introduced August 1940. NCOs wore British rank insignia (French titles, Flemish titles omitted) - Adjudant, Premier Sergeant Major, Premier Sergeant, Belgian coat-of-arms, shield in wreath, crown only, on the cuffs; Sergeant, Sergeant (Section Leader), Caporal, Soldat de première classe, Soldat, on both upper sleeves 3 worsted chevrons plus brass grenade on left upper sleeve, then 3-0 chevrons. All ranks wore from March 1941 a flag on the right shoulder, from July a 'BELGIUM' title on the left: a triangular brigade patch; and British arm-of-service stripes - red (staff), scarlet (infantry), yellow and red (armoured cars), red and blue (artillery), yellow and blue (transport), dull cherry (medical). Service stripes were worn on the left cuff, gold diagonal wound stripes on the right. Commandos wore 10 Commando and Combined Operations sleeve insignia, and a green beret with badge on a black leather backing, Volunteers from Canada a maple-leaf sleeve badge.

**D2: Capitaine-Commandant/Kapitein-Commandant, Independent Belgian Brigade; Belgium, September 1944**

Officers wore British worsted rank crowns and 'pips' on coloured cloth backings on the battledress and greatcoat: crown and 2-0 'pips' for Colonel (the highest combat rank, entitled to red gorget-patches), Lieutenant-Colonel and Major; 3-1 pips for Capitaine-Commandant (after 1942 with a silver braid bar) and Capitaine, Lieutenant and Sous-Lieutenant. Backings were red (staff, artillery), scarlet (infantry), yellow (armoured cars, transport), dull cherry (medical). Lt. Gen. van Strydonck wore Belgian rank insignia on his battledress straps, Lt. Gen. Daufresne de la Chevalerie the British equivalent. All officers could wear the pre-1940 service uniform and insignia. Note the new brigade patch introduced in September 1944.

**D3: Adjudant, Independent Belgian Parachute Company; England, June 1943**

Paratroopers wore British Denison smocks, plain

airborne helmets, British parachute wings and, from 21 July 1942, the 'Pegasus' Airborne Forces patch, and the maroon beret with lion badge. On becoming an SAS unit in February 1944 the SAS cap badge and breast parachute wings were substituted, and light blue on maroon curved 'S.A.S.' shoulder titles added. Note the Belgian version of the British Regimental Sergeant-Major's rank badge.

**E1: Luitenant-Kolonel, Royal Netherlands Brigade 'Prinses Irene'; England, 1944**

The 19 June 1940 Uniform Regulations prescribed British service dress for officers and warrant officers. The lion cap badge was gold metal for generals, otherwise bronze; after 1944 gold wire on black cloth for generals and colonels (with collar patch-colour hat bands), gold metal for other field officers, otherwise bronze. The 'Lion and Nederland' national badge was worn by all ranks on the left sleeve, and the orange lanyard by officers. Silver six-pointed stars and gold scalloped edging or bars (metals reversed for Reconnaissance and MPs) appeared on collar patches: generals (Luitenant-Generaal, Generaal-Majoor—'Generaal' rank not held), 4 silver or 2 silver over 2 gold, and edging; Kolonel, Luitenant-Kolonel, Majoor, 3-1 stars and bar; Kapitein, Eerste Luitenant, Tweede Luitenant, 3-1 stars; Adjudant-Onderofficier, a silver stud. Collar patches were red (generals), blue (infantry, MP), light blue (reconnaissance), black (artillery), and green (transport). 'Prinses Irene' officers and WOs had a brass shoulder strap regimental badge, others a brass national badge. From 29 August 1941 volunteers from Canada wore an orange maple-leaf left sleeve badge, from 9 June 1944, those from South Africa an orange springbok's head. Red chevrons were worn on the right cuff for each year of service from 10 May 1940, and gold wire wound stripes on the left cuff.

**E2: Kapitein, Royal Netherlands Brigade 'Prinses Irene'; Normandy, August 1944**

All ranks wore British battledress field uniform, officers with a khaki lanyard. The Dutch M1923 27 helmet was soon superseded by the British Mk II. All ranks wore the khaki sidecap with appropriate lion badge (brass for NCOs and men), replaced on 9 February 1944 by the general service cap with

orange oval badge-backing. The Reconnaissance Battalion had a black beret; parachute-qualified personnel from 20 January 1943, a maroon beret and an orange parachute on the right upper sleeve. Officer and WO rank insignia was applied directly to the collar—generals wore a gold scalloped bar above the 4 stars. Brigade personnel wore an orange 'Prinses Irene' title on both upper sleeves and, from 14 September 1943, British arm-of-service stripes on the right sleeve—red (staff, infantry, transport), gold and yellow (reconnaissance), red and blue (artillery). From 9 June 1944 the range was extended and applied to all personnel. Dutch Marines in the USA wore USMC uniforms with Dutch pocket patches.

***E3: Sergeant 1<sup>re</sup> klasse, 2 (Dutch) Troop, 10th (Inter-Allied) Commando; Arnhem, September 1944***

Other ranks wore battledress with British rank insignia: Sergeant-Majoor, a brass crown and wreath on cuffs; Segeant eerste klasse, Fourier, Sergeant, Korporaal, Soldaat, 3 chevrons with bar, with brass crown, then 3 2 or no chevrons. Commandos wore the green beret with black badge-backing, red on dark blue 'COMMANDO' title on the left sleeve, 'No 10 COMMANDO' on the right, both with Combined Operations badges, and sometimes a black and white lanyard on the left shoulder. Rubber boots were useful in the flooded countryside.

***F1: Caporal, 1st French Marine Infantry Battalion; Quastina, Palestine, November 1941***

In the Middle East troops below general officer rank wore the British khaki drill shirt and shorts, Mk II helmet (French M1935 AFV helmet for AFV crews) or Wolseley pith helmet, and in cold temperatures battledress. Besides the branch-coloured officers' and NCOs' kepis which some men had managed to retain, coloured versions of the khaki sidecap appeared from 1941—black piped red (artillery), dark blue with red piping and gold fouled anchor (1<sup>re</sup> BIM; BPr; 1<sup>re</sup> BIMP; BM officers); red (1<sup>re</sup> RSM); light blue (CNA officers). 13DBLE privates wore the white kepi, 1st Tank Company a plain black beret, native troops a red or khaki fez (RTST, BMs), white turban (CNAs), black cossack hat (Circassians).

Officers (Colonel, Lieutenant-Colonel, Chef de



*HM Prince Bernhard and Col. de Ruyter van Steveninck at the 'Prinses Irene' Brigade's standing-down parade, The Hague,*

*13 July 1945. (Sectie Militaire Geschiedenis Landmachtstaf, Den Haag)*

Bataillon, Capitaine, Lieutenant, Sous-Lieutenant) wore 5–1 gold rank bars on dark blue shoulder-loops (Lt. Col., 2nd and 4th bars silver). Warrant officers (Aspirant, Adjudant-Chef, Adjudant) wore a gold bar with 2 light blue 'breaks', gold bar with red centre thread, silver bar with red thread respectively. Rank braids were worn around the kepi top and as chevrons, point-up, on the sidecap front. NCOs (Sergent-Chef, Sergent de carrière, Sergent) wore 3–1 gold bars on the shirt front, from 1941 3–1 gold chevrons point-up on dark blue shoulder loops; junior NCOs (Caporal-Chef, Caporal, Soldat de première/deuxième classe), 1 gold, 2 branch-colour (green 13DBLE, red for most other units), 2–0 branch-colour bars/chevrons. This soldier wears the Colonial Troops anchor badge, the helmet flash adopted July 1940, obsolete British M1908 webbing (French leather equipment was also used). In February 1943 the 1<sup>re</sup> DFL adopted the red Cross of Lorraine, edged white, on a blue rhombus edged



*13 DBLE officer, 1942: pale khaki-covered kepi; British BD; dark blue collar patch with two gold braids, gold grenade with '13' in bomb; gold-on-dark-blue rank loops on shoulder straps. (Imperial War Museum)*

red, as the divisional arm badge, although the Cross had been worn unofficially by some units since 1941 on a blue shield. The Transition Army wore pre-1940 French, from November 1942 some British uniforms, the French Army from August 1943 mostly United States uniforms.

***F2: Général de Brigade Leclerc, Free French Flying Column; Tripoli, Libya, January 1943***

In service uniform officers wore the coloured kepi (generals and some other officers, also khaki), British or French khaki tunic, breeches or trousers, in the Middle East in khaki drill, and 'Sam Browne' belt, branch-colour pentagonal collar patches; and where appropriate regimental badge on right breast-pocket fob. Cuff rank insignia, from 1941 on dark blue shoulder loops, black for generals. Free French generals (Général de Division/Brigade) 3-2 silver stars, in Transition and unified French Army also Général d'Armée de Corps d'Armée (5-4 stars), Marechal de l'Armée de Corps d'Armée (5-4 stars), Marechal de France (7 stars) only held by Pétain. Leclerc, wearing an old cavalry officer's coat with colonial collar patches, chose to wear black cuff patches backing his two rank stars. He sometimes wore a sand coloured kepi-cover.

***F3: Second Maître, 1st French Marine Commando Battalion; Ouistreham, Normandy, June 1944***

French troops in England in July 1940 wore French uniforms with tricolour shoulder loops; from August, British battledress with a white-on-khaki 'FRANCE' title; M1935 French, later Mk II British helmet; and from 1941 shoulder-loop rank insignia. Marine officers and NCOs wore the blue naval peaked cap, privates the sailor's cap with the 'F.N.F.L.' title; officers and senior NCOs a gold fouled anchor above gold rank bars on dark blue shoulder boards or loops, other ranks 3-1 gold or red chevrons only. In October 1942 Commandos adopted the green beret, with a red Cross of Lorraine on a white rhombus on blue-red shield cap badge, from April 1944 the brass badge illustrated; 10th, later 4th Commando titles; and Combined Operations badge. Note the British signaller's badge and striped naval undershirt. Army Commandos wore dark blue berets with unit beret badges and shoulder titles. Paratroopers, trained until 1943 by the Poles, wore a black beret with a silver parachute on a light grey pentagonal patch cap badge (January 1942–April 1943 beige SAS beret



*The French 4th Air Infantry Battalion parades in London on 14 July 1943, wearing black berets with pentangular beret-badges. The second soldier from the left wears the Polish parachute wings on his left breast.*



and cap badge); from January 1944, the silver British Parachute Regiment badge minus lion and crown; from November 1944, maroon beret and SAS badge; dark blue shoulder boards, silver rank insignia. Parachute qualification badges were the silver Polish diving eagle badge (left breast), from 1943 the Cross of Lorraine on a winged parachute (right breast) with British sleeve wings or SAS left-breast wings. The British 'Pegasus' airborne patch was worn on the upper sleeves below a white-on-black 'FRANCE' shoulder title.

**G1: Commandant, 3rd Free French Fighter Squadron 'Normandie'; Orel, USSR, July 1943**  
FAFL personnel wore the M1934 dark blue tunic, peaked cap or sidecap, from 1940 with dark blue battledress; rank insignia on the cap band, tunic cuff and blouse shoulder loops. M1934 Air Force right breast badge; FAFL membership badge, introduced October 1940, on the left breast, modified in August 1943 to F.A.F.C. initials. Note the gold wire service chevrons (1 per 6 months) above a Cross of Lorraine, on dark blue for FAFL and FNFL, on khaki for FFL; the M1916 pilot's breast badge, and red and gold squadron badge, Soviet breeches and

boots, and the gold right shoulder title 'FRANCE' rendered in Russian.

Other nationalities wore RAF uniforms, rank and cap badges with national shoulder titles. Exceptions were the Dutch (national cap badge), Greeks and Norwegians (national rank and cap badges), Poles (national cap badge, additional Polish collar rank insignia), the Yugoslavs (from 1943 additional Partisan rank insignia). See MAA 225, *The Royal Air Force 1939-45*.

**G2: Kaplar, 1st Battalion, Yugoslav Royal Guards; Alexandria, Egypt, March 1942**

Yugoslav troops in the Middle East wore British khaki drill shirts, shorts or trousers, or battledress, with the British steel helmet, the Yugoslav grey-green field cap (illustrated), the British khaki peaked cap (officers), for other ranks the khaki sidecap, from 1943 the general service cap. Officers' cap badge was the M1939 embroidered silver crowned double-headed eagle and gold royal monogram (Cyrillic P = Petar) in a gold wreath, on branch-coloured backing (dark red for infantry); NCOs a silver metal eagle; Privates (Kaplar, Redov) no badge. Senior NCOs (Narednik vodnik I-III klase) wore 3-1 gold

rings piped black on shoulder straps, from late 1941 a gold crown above 2-0 short gold bars on the left cuff. Lower ranks (Narednik, Podnarednik, Kaplar, Redov), 3-0 gold pips on shoulder straps, from late 1941 British worsted chevrons point down (white cotton on khaki drill shirts) on both upper sleeves, from March 1942 a gold crown above 3, then 3, 2, 0 chevrons, point up. No branch insignia, the only unit insignia the 10th Indian Division sleeve badge. A silver eagle on a dark blue shield was used as a vehicle sign. Commandos wore green berets.

**G3: Potpukovnik, General Staff, Royal Yugoslav Forces; Cairo, Egypt, June 1943**

Officers wore British khaki or khaki drill service tunics, trousers and 'Sam Browne' belts with the khaki peaked cap or grey-green field cap. Yugoslav rank insignia: Gen. Ilić gold plaited shoulder cords; other officers, stiff gold shoulder boards, changed in late 1941 to gold crossed scimitars, points up, crowns and six-pointed stars of 'pips'. 'Armijski Djeneral Živković wore a crown over swords over 3 stars; Pukovnik, Potpukovnik, Major crown over



*Maj. Gen. de Larminat addresses the 1st Marine Battalion in Syria, September, 1941. Note the early Cross of Lorraine arm badge.*



3-1 stars; Kapetan I/II klasse, Poručnik, Potporučnik, 4-1 stars. Royal ADCs wore gold aiguillettes on the right shoulder and a gold crowned royal monogram above rank insignia. Ilić wore a British general's gorget patches, Živković small pentangular red patches with a thin gold stripe, and red cap band; other officers, branch-colour collar patches, not worn on the khaki drill tunic. General Staff officers wore red velvet collar patches piped gold, aiguillettes, and a silver pocket badge. Later some officers wore US Army service uniform with US lapel branch badges.

**H1: Tagmatarchīs, 1st Greek Brigade; Egypt, June 1942**

Greek officers' and warrant officers' service dress consisted of the British (or identical Greek) khaki tunic, with cavalry-twill breeches and black riding boots; or British khaki drill tunic and trousers, or bush-jacket and shorts. The khaki peaked cap had a brown chin strap, gold crown over blue-white cockade cap badge, cloth peak with two rows of gold oakleaves (generals) or one row (field officers). Pre-1941 gold metal shoulder strap rank insignia were retained. For generals these were: Archistratīgos (King George II), crown, crossed batons, crowned double 'G' royal monogram; Antistratīgos, Ypostratīgos, Taxiarchos (created 1941), crown, crossed sword and baton, 2-0 large silver six-pointed stars. Field officers—Syntagmatarchīs, Antisyntagmatarchīs, Tagmatarchīs, crown, 3-1 small stars; company officers—Lochagos, Ypolochagos, Anthypolochagos, 3-1 small silver stars. Warrant officers (Anthypaspistīs) wore a vertical gold braid bar piped in branch-colour. Generals had large red collar patches with a gold button and leaves (Taxiarchos, button and red gimp stripe); lower ranks, branch-

colour patches with gold button and flaming grenade, General Staff with gold patch-piping. Branch-colours were: red (infantry), green (armour), black (artillery), crimson (engineers). A white head of Athena was worn on both upper arms on a circular (1st Brigade), rhomboid (2nd) or square (3rd) blue patch.

**H2: Ypolochagos, 3rd Greek Mountain Brigade; Rimini, Italy, September 1944**

Field uniform for all ranks was the British khaki drill shirt with shorts or trousers, or battledress, with British steel or pith helmet, peaked cap (officers), or the British khaki sidecap with crown and cockade directly above the buttons, or, from 1943, the khaki general service cap. Officers' rank insignia, in braid, were worn on khaki drill shoulder loops on the shirt, which omitted branch insignia. On battledress British arm-of-service strips (with Greek branch-colours, green and red for armour) were worn on both upper sleeves, and generals wore collar patches. Brigade patches were often omitted in combat.

**H3: Epilochias, Greek Sacred Company; Aegean islands, July 1944**

NCOs (Epilochias, Lochias, Dekaneus, Ypodekan-eus) wore 3-1 and  $\frac{1}{2}$  width gold branch-coloured chevrons point-up (professionals, volunteers) or in yellow (reservists, conscripts), modified in 1941 to a gold crown above 3, then 3-1 chevrons for both categories, conforming to British practice. Privates (Stratiotīs) had no insignia. Sacred Company troops wore a green beret with crown and cockade, and a distinctive bronze breast badge with the traditional Greek warning to a departing warrior—'Come back carrying your shield, or [carried dead] upon it'.

**Farbtafeln**

A1 British gelieferte Uniform, mit Helmabzeichen in Nationalfarben; Rangabzeichen des Gefreiten sind zwei Silbersterne auf den Schulterstücken in Farbe der Waffengattung. Siehe also Gurten aus 1908; siehe Nationaltitel auf Schulter und Stil des Schulterwappens. A2 Seit 1943 trugen Generale in England Sterne über gekreuzten Schwertern auf rotgeränderten Schulterstücken als Rangabzeichen; Kappenschirm-Verzierungen und Lampassen wurden aufgegeben. A3 Sowohl Infanterie- wie Panzerseinheiten trugen gelbe Ränder auf den Schulterstücken der britischen Felduniform. Siehe schwarze Kappe des Royal Armoured Corps mit Nationalabzeichen und Schulterspiegel der Brigade.

B1 Dunkelgrünes Artillerieband um Kappe; Kragenspiegel für motorisierte Artillerie; dunkelgrünes Abzeichen der Einheit mit Silberabzeichen am Kragen; 'Todesstruppen'-Ärmelabzeichen der 1. Truppe; Brustabzeichen des regiments-offiziers; Absolventenabzeichen der Offiziersschule; schwarzes Schulterstück links

**Notes sur les planches en couleur**

A1 Uniforme réglementaire britannique, avec insigne de casque aux couleurs nationales; l'insigne de grade de caporal comprend deux boutons d'argent sur un écusson de la couleur de la branche sur la patte d'épaule. Notez l'ancien équipement en toile (le webbing) de 1908; insigne de nationalité sur l'épaule; et style du port des armes sur l'épaule. A2 À partir de 1943, les généraux adoptèrent comme insigne de grade en Angleterre des étoiles au-dessus d'épées croisées sur des pattes d'épaules à passepoil rouge d'officiers de campagne et abandonneront la broderie sur la visière de casquette et les raies sur les pantalons. A3 Les unités d'infanterie et de blindés portaient un passepoil jaune sur les pattes d'épaule des BD britanniques. Notez le béret noir du Royal Armoured Corps avec insigne de nationalité, et écusson de brigade sur l'épaule.

B1 Bandeau de casquette vert foncé de l'artillerie; insignes de branche sur le col pour l'artillerie motorisée; cordon vert foncé de l'unité, insigne argent de l'unité sur le col;



für 10. Panzerbrigade; nationaler Schultertitel. Bz Im allgemeinen wurden polnische Rangabzeichen im Feld auf britischen Uniformen und Kappen getragen, zusammen mit Nationalabzeichen und Waffengattungsabzeichen. Dieser polnische Soldat aus einer Einheit mit gemischten Nationalitäten trägt den Titel auf britische Weise. B3 Sie typische polnische Kappe, Unteroffiziers-Rangabzeichen und spezielles Artillerieabzeichen. Die meisten Marineuniformen waren praktisch identisch, lediglich mit nationalen Unterschieden.

C1 Ursprünglich norwegische graugrüne M1934-Uniformen wurden getragen, später durch britische Versionen ersetzt. Nationaltitel und Flagge wurden von allen Rängen getragen. Sterne und Einfassungen der Offiziersränge am Kragen, informell manchmal auch an den Manschetten. C2 Unteroffiziers-Schulterabzeichen wurden 1943 durch Winkel nach britischer Art ersetzt. Die drei Gebirgskompanien trugen ein bis drei schwarze Streifen am Ärmel unter dem Abzeichen 'North Cape'. Die Khaki-Kappe wurde 1943 durch jeweils rote, grüne und schwarze Kappen für Flieger-, Kommando- und Aufklärungseinheiten ersetzt, oder durch die Khaki-Kappe mit einem weißen 'H7'-Nationalabzeichen. C3 Nichts unterscheidet diesen dänischen Helden von anderen SAS-Offizieren im Mittelmeergebiet.

D1 Seit Juli 1941 trugen alle Ränge ein Flaggenabzeichen am rechten und ein Nationalabzeichen am linken Ärmel, ferner das dreieckige Brigadeabzeichen und britische Waffengattungsabzeichen. Auf den Kappen nach britischer Art wurde ein Löwenabzeichen getragen, und an den Ärmeln britische Unteroffizierswinkel. Diagonale Streifen an der rechten Manschette, Waffengattungsstreifen an der linken. D2 Britische Uniformen und Rangabzeichen waren fast universell, doch waren belgische Uniformen aus der Zeit vor 1914 erlaubt, wo vorhanden. Siehe neues Brigadeabzeichen – seit September 1944. D3 Kappe mit Löwenabzeichen und belgische Rangabzeichen am Ärmel sind der einzige Unterschied zur Uniform britischer Fallschirmjäger. Im Februar 1944 wurde dies eine SAS-Einheit, mit neuem SAS-Kappenabzeichen, Schultertiteln und Fallschirmjägerschwingen.

E1 Ärmelabzeichen 'Lion und Nederland', linksseitig von allen Rängen getragen, und orangefarbener Tragkord für Offiziere – auf britischen Uniformen. Rangabzeichen auf Aufschlägen in Waffengattungsfarben; Messingabzeichen 'Prinses Irene' oder nationalabzeichen auf Schulterstücken. E2 An Felduniform trugen Offiziere Khaki-Gurte, Rangabzeichen am Kragen und 'Prinses Irene' Abzeichen in Orange auf beiden Schultern. Britische Dienststreifen am rechten Ärmel und ein orangefarbener Fallschirm für dazwischen qualifizierte Männer. E3 Kennzeichnung 'Commando' und 'No. 10 Commando' am linken und rechten Ärmel über den Combined Operations-Abzeichen, manchmal mit schwarzweißem Schulterkord links; schwarzfeldriges Abzeichen auf grüner Kommando-Kappe.

F1 Britische Khaki-Felduniform; siehe Ankerabzeichen für Kolonialtruppen, Helmabzeichen der 'Freien Franzosen', angenommen seit Juli 1940, und alte britische Gurte aus 1908. F2 Leclerc trug einen alten Kavallerieoffiziers-mantel mit kolonialen Aufschlägen, wozu ein schwarzes Rangabzeichen mit seinen Sternen am Ärmel hinzugefügt. Manchmal trug er auch ein sandfarbiges übergezogenes Képi. F3 Dieses Kappenabzeichen ersetzte im April 1944 ein derartiges Lothringerkreuz. Siehe gestreifte Marinehemd, Marine-Rangabzeichen auf Schulterstücken, Combined Operations- und Nachrichtenabzeichen. Diese Einheit trainierte mit dem 10. Kommando und wurde später zum 4. Kommando versetzt; sie trugen beide Schulterabzeichen.

G1 Französische Feldbluse aus 1934, getragen mit sowjetischen Breeches und Stiefeln; siehe nationalabzeichen in russischer Sprache, in Gold an der rechten Schulter, Luftwaffenabzeichen und Abzeichen der Luftwaffe der 'Freien Franzosen' an der Brust, rechts und links; Pilotenabzeichen 1916; rotgoldenes Schwadronabzeichen; und Goldwinkel, je einen für sechs Monate Dienst. G2 Jugoslawische Kappe beibehalten, sonst britische Uniform. Im März 1942 wurden die Rangwinkel umgekehrt und seither mit der Spitze nach oben getragen. Siehe Ärmelabzeichen für 10. indische Division. G3 Oberstleutnant in britischer Uniform; Kragenspiegel in rotem Samt, goldgesäumt, Achseln und silbernes Taschenabzeichen zur Identifizierung.

H1 Schulterabzeichen für Major; rundes Ärmelabzeichen zeigt 1. Brigade im Gegensatz zur 2. (Rhomboid) und 3. Brigade (viereckig). Kragenabzeichen in Waffengattungsfarben: rot, grün, schwarz, purpurrot, für Infanterie, Panzer, Artillerie und Pioniere. H2 An der britischen Felduniform wurden Waffengattungsstreifen getragen, entsprechend den griechischen Waffengattungen, wie oben; auf Khakihemden nur Schulter-Rangabzeichen; Brigadeabzeichen waren auf dem Schlachtfeld nur selten zu sehen. H3 Ein Sergeant, der zu dieser Zeit britische Winkel trug. Sie grüne Kappe der Sacred Company mit Krone und Kokardenabzeichen sowie Bronzeabzeichen an der Brust.

insigne honoraire de 'Troupe de la Mort' sur la manche de la 1ère Troupe; insigne régimentaire d'officier sur la poitrine; insigne de l'école d'officier; patte d'épaule noire sur le côté gauche de la 10th Armoured Brigade; et insigne de nationalité sur l'épaule. B2 En général on portait le grade polonais sur l'uniforme et la coiffure britannique en campagne, avec l'insigne de nationalité et les insignes de formation sur l'épaule, et souvent des insignes de branche sur le col. Ce commando polonais qui sert dans une unité de nationalité mixte porte le titre à la manière britannique. B3 Notez la casquette polonaise caractéristique, les insignes de grade des petites officiers et l'insigne de spécialité de l'artillerie. La plupart des uniformes de la Marine étaient quasiment identiques, avec pour seules différences les insignes nationaux.

C1 Pour commencer on a porté l'uniforme norvégien M1934 gris-vert, qui fut remplacé par la suite par les équivalents britanniques. Tous les grades portaient l'insigne et le drapeau national. Les officiers portaient des étoiles et des liserés indiquant leur grade sur le col, et de temps à autre sur les poignets aussi ce qui n'était pas réglementaire. C2 Les insignes de patte d'épaule des sous-officiers furent remplacés en 1943 par des chevrons de style britannique. Les trois Mountain Companies portaient une à trois bandes noires sur la manche au-dessous de l'insigne de la formation du 'Cap Nord'. Le calot kaki fut remplacé à partir de 1943 par des bérets rouges, verts et noirs pour les troupes aéroportées, de commando et de reconnaissance ou le képi kaki de Service Général, avec un insigne de nationalité portant le chiffre 'H7' en forme de couronne de couleur blanche sur le képi. C3 Rien ne distingue ces héros d'aucun des autres officiers SAS dans le bassin méditerranéen.

D1 À partir de juillet 1941 tous les grades portèrent un écusson de drapeau sur la manche droite, un insigne de nationalité sur la gauche; l'écusson de brigade triangulaire; et les bandes britanniques de l'arme de service. Sur la coiffure de style britannique, un insigne avec le lion national, et les chevrons des sous-officiers britanniques sur les manches. Raies diagonales enroulées sur le poignet droit, raies de service sur le gauche. D2 L'uniforme et l'insigne de grade britanniques étaient quasiment universels, bien qu'avant 1940 on ait pu porter l'uniforme belge lorsqu'on en possédait un. Notez le nouvel insigne de brigade, à partir de septembre 1944. D3 L'insigne de coiffure avec le lion et l'insigne de grade belge sont les seules différences par rapport à l'uniforme et à l'équipement des parachutistes britanniques. Elle devint en février 1944 unité SAS, avec un nouvel insigne de calot SAS, des titres d'épaule et des ailes de parachute.

E1 Tous les grades portaient sur la manche gauche l'insigne du 'Lion et Nederland', et les officiers un cordon orange, sur les uniformes de service britannique. On portait un insigne de grade sur les insignes de col dans la couleur de la branche; un insigne en laiton de l'unité de la 'Prinses Irene' ou de nationalité, sur les pattes d'épaule. E2 Les officiers portaient sur la tenue de combat des cordons kaki, un insigne de grade épingle sur le col, et dans cette unité les insignes 'Prinses Irene' en orange sur les deux épaules. On portait sur la manche droite des bandes de l'arme de service britannique; et un parachute orange pour les parachutistes. E3 Titres de 'Commando' et de 'Commando No 10' portés sur les manches gauches et droites au-dessus des insignes des Operations Mixtes, avec parfois un cordon blanc/noir sur l'épaule gauche; fond noir de l'insigne sur le béret vert de Commando.

F1 Uniforme d'exercice kaki britannique; notez l'insigne à ancre des troupes coloniales, le titre de casque 'France Libre' adopté en 1940, l'ancien équipement en toile (webbing) britannique de 1908. F2 Leclerc aimait une ancienne capote d'officier de la cavalerie avec des insignes de col de Colonel et ajoutait un écusson noir comme renfort à ses étoiles de grade sur les poignets. Il portait parfois un couvre-chef de couleur sable. F3 Cet insigne de coiffure a remplacé la Croix de Lorraine tricolore en avril 1944. Notez le maillot rayé de la Marine, les grades de la Marine sur les pattes d'épaule, les insignes d'Operations Mixtes et de 'signaller'. Cette unité, ayant suivi son entraînement avec le 10ème Commando, puis transférée par la suite au 4ème Commando, portait les deux titres d'épaule.

G1 Tanique française de 1934, portée avec des culottes et des bottes soviétiques; notez l'insigne de nationalité doré, en russe, sur l'épaule droite. Insignes de poitrine de l'Air Force et de l'Armée de l'Air de la France Libre, à droite et à gauche; insigne de pilote de 1916; insigne d'escadron rouge et or; et chevrons de service dorés; un pour chaque période de 6 mois. G2 Le calot yougoslave est conservé, autrement uniforme britannique. Les chevrons de grade furent inversés en mars 1942, et portés par la suite la pointe vers le haut. Notez l'insigne de manche de la 10ème Division indienne. G3 Lieutenant-colonel d'état-major en uniforme de service britannique; insignes de col en velours rouge à passepoil or, les aiguillettes et l'écusson de poche argent identifient l'état-major.

H1 Insigne de grade de commandant sur la patte d'épaule; le fond arrondi de l'insigne de manche identifie la 1ère Brigade de la 2nde (losange) et de la 3ème (carré). Les insignes de col étaient de la même couleur que la branche de service: rouge, vert, noir, pourpre pour l'infanterie, les blindés, l'artillerie, et le génie. H2 On portait des bandes de l'arme de service sur la tenue de combat britannique, mais correspondant aux couleurs grecques, comme ci-dessus; sur les chemises d'exercice kaki, seule la boucle de grade était portée sur l'épaule; on voyait rarement des insignes de brigade sur le champ de bataille. H3 Un sergent qui porte à cette date des chevrons de style britannique. Notez le béret vert de la Sacred Company avec l'insigne de la couronne et de la cocarde, et insigne de distinction en bronze sur la poitrine.